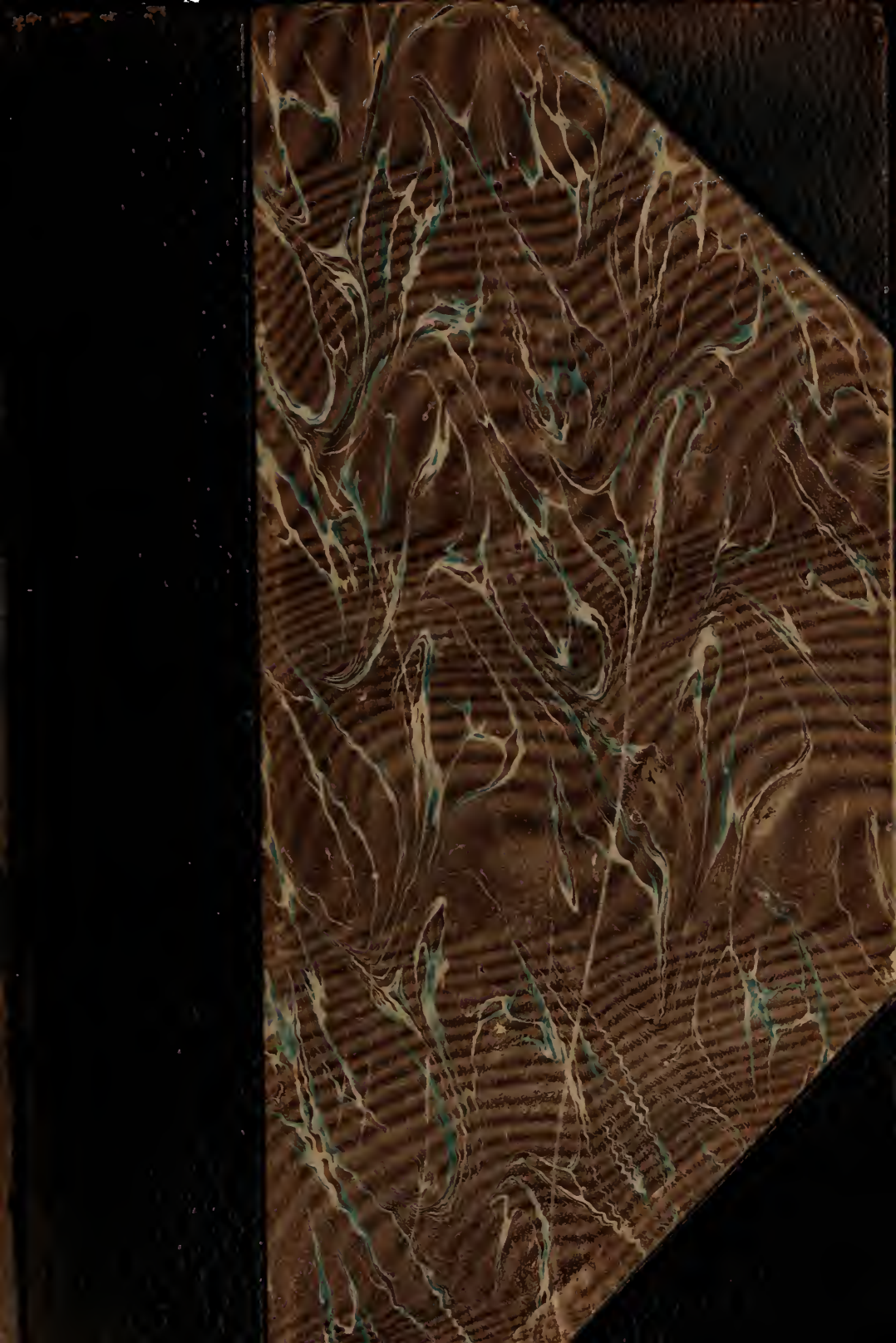

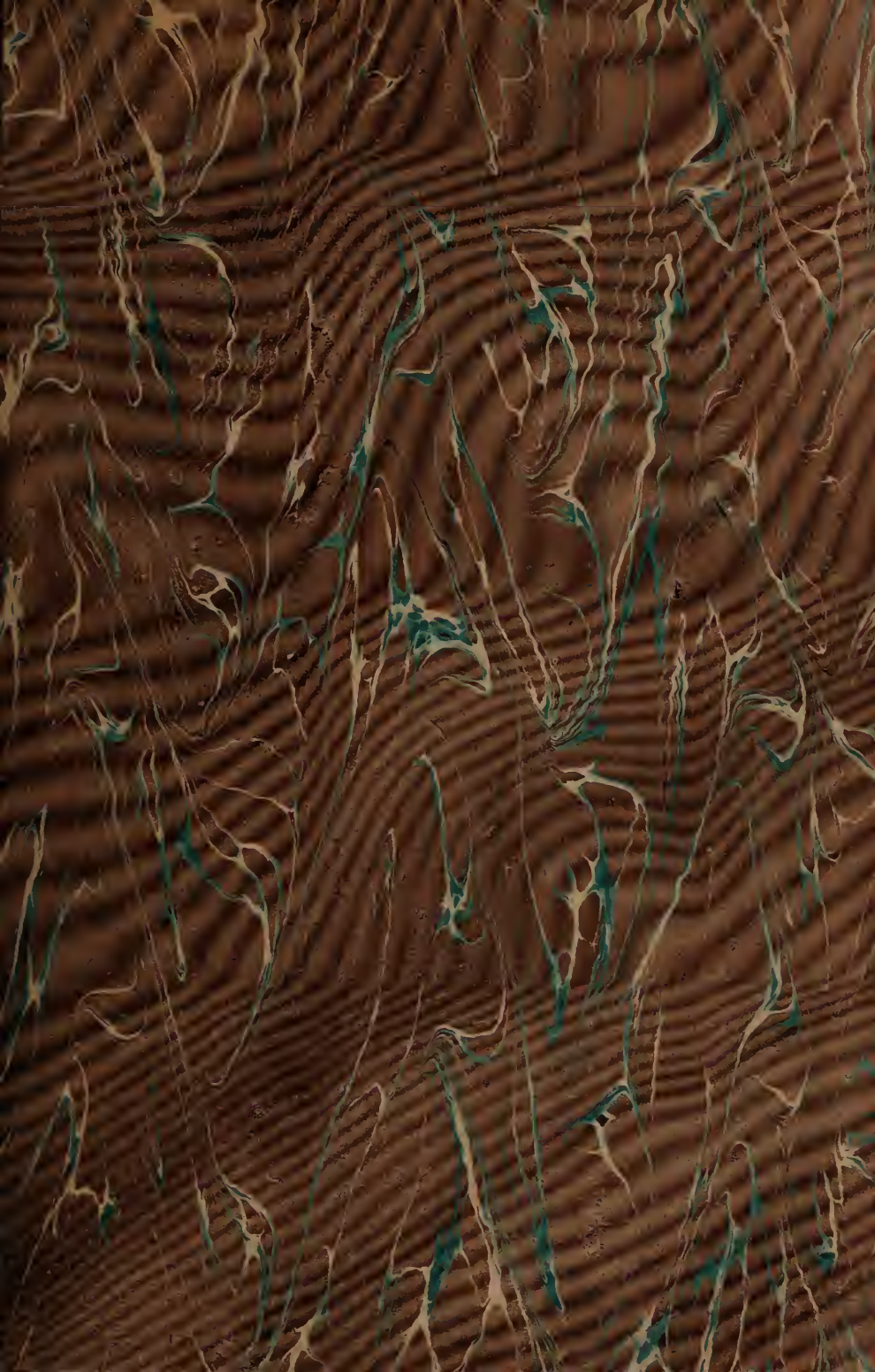

Edition de Luxe

The Viaticum

AND OTHER STORIES

By

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Count T—— called upon her the very next day

Frontis. VOL. III

The E. R. Dunbar's
Publishing Co.
Boston New York

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GUY DE MAUPASSANT

Illustrated

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EDITION DE LUXE

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THE VIATICUM

"AFTER all," Count d'Avorsy said, stirring his tea with the slow movements of a prelate, "what truth was there in anything that was said at Court, almost without any restraint, and did the Empress, whose beauty has been ruined by some secret grief, who will no longer see anyone and who soothes her continual mental weariness by some journeys without an object and without a rest, in foggy and melancholy islands, and did she really forget Cæsar's wife ought not even to be suspected, did she really give herself to that strange and attractive corrupter, Ladislas Ferkoz?"

The bright night seemed to be scattering handfuls of stars into the placid sea, which was as calm as a blue pond, slumbering in the depths of a forest. Among the tall climbing roses, which hung a mantle of yellow flowers to the fretted baluster of the terrace, there stood out in the distance the illuminated fronts of the hotels and villas, and occasionally women's laughter was heard above the dull, monotonous sound of surf and the noise of the fog-horns.

Then Captain Sigmund Oroshaz, whose sad and pensive face of a soldier who has seen too much slaughter and too many charnel houses, was marked by a large scar, raised his head and said in a grave, haughty voice:

"Nobody has lied in accusing Maria-Gloriosa of adultery, and nobody has calumniated the Empress and her minister, whom God has damned in the other world.

Ladislas Ferkoz was his sovereign's lover until he died, and made his august master ridiculous and almost odious, for the man, no matter who he be, who allows himself to be flouted by a creature who is unworthy of bearing his name and of sharing his bread; who puts up with such disgrace, who does not crush the guilty couple with all the weight of his power, is not worth pity, nor does he deserve to be spared the mockery. And if I affirm that so harshly, my dear Count — although years and years have passed since the sponge passed over that old story — the reason is that I saw the last chapter of it, quite in spite of myself, however, for I was the officer who was on duty at the palace, and obliged to obey orders, just as if I had been on the field of battle — and on that day I was on duty near Maria-Gloriosa."

Madame de Laumières, who had begun an animated conversation on crinolines, admist the fragrant odor of Russian cigarettes, and who was making fun of the striking toilets, with which she had amused herself by scanning through her opera glass a few hours previously at the races, stopped, for even when she was talking most volubly she always kept her ears open to hear what was being said around her, and as her curiosity was aroused, she interrupted Sigmund Oroshaz.

"Ah! Monsieur," she said, "you are not going to leave our curiosity unsatisfied. . . . A story about the Empress puts all our scandals on the beach, and all our questions of dress into the shade, and, I am sure," she added with a smile at the corners of her mouth, "that even our friend, Madame d'Ormonde will leave off flirting with Monsieur Le Brassard to listen to you."

Captain Oroshaz continued, with his large blue eyes full of recollections:

" It was in the middle of a grand ball that the Emperor was giving on the occasion of some family anniversary, though I forget exactly what, and where Maria-Gloriosa, who was in great grief, as she had heard that her lover was ill and his life almost despaired of, far from her, was going about with her face as pale as that of *Our Lady of Sorrows,* seemed to be a soul in affliction, appeared to be ashamed of her bare shoulders, as if she were being made a parade of in the light, while he, the adored of her heart, was lying on a bed of sickness, getting weaker every moment, longing for her and perhaps calling for her in his distress. About midnight, when the violins were striking up the quadrille, which the Emperor was to dance with the wife of the French Ambassador, one of the ladies of honor, Countess Szegedin, went up to the Empress, and whispered a few words to her, in a very low voice. Maria-Gloriosa grew still paler, but mastered her emotion and waited until the end of the last figure. Then, however, she could not restrain herself any longer, and even without giving any pretext for running away in such a manner, and leaning on the arm of her lady of honor, she made her way through the crowd as if she were in a dream and went to her own apartments. I told you that I was on duty that evening at the door of her rooms, and according to etiquette, I was going to salute her respectfully, but she did not give me time.

" ' Captain,' she said excitedly and vehemently, ' give orders for my own private coachman, Hans Hildersheim, to get a carriage ready for me immediately,' but thinking better of it immediately she went on: ' But no, we should only lose time, and every minute is precious; give me a cloak quickly, Madame, and a lace veil; we

will go out of one of the small doors in the park, and take the first conveyance we see."

"She wrapped herself in her furs, hid her face in her mantilla, and I accompanied her, without at first knowing what this mystery was, and where we were going to, on this mad expedition. I hailed a cab that was dawdling by the side of the pavement, and when the Empress gave me the address of Ladislas Ferkoz, the Minister of State, in a low voice, in spite of my usual phlegm, I felt a vague shiver of emotion, one of those movements of hesitation and recoil, from which the bravest are not exempt at times. But how could I get out of this unpleasant part of acting as her companion, and how show want of politeness to a sovereign who had completely lost her head? Accordingly, we started, but the Empress did not pay any more attention to me than if I had not been sitting by her side in that narrow conveyance, but stifled her sobs with her pocket handkerchief, muttered a few incoherent words, and occasionally trembled from head to foot. Her lover's name rose to her lips as if it had been a response in a litany, and I thought that she was praying to the Virgin that she might not arrive too late to see Ladislas Ferkoz again in the possession of his faculties, and keep him alive for a few hours. Suddenly, as if in reply to herself, she said: 'I will not cry any more; he must see me looking beautiful, so that he may remember me, even in death!'

"When we arrived, I saw that we were expected, and that they had not doubted that the Empress would come to close her lover's eyes with a last kiss. She left me there, and hurried to Ladislas Ferkoz's room, without even shutting the doors behind her, where his beautiful,

sensual, gipsy head stood out from the whiteness of the pillows; but his face was quite bloodless, and there was no life left in it, except in his large, strange eyes, that were striated with gold, like the eyes of an astrologer or of a bearded vulture.

"The cold numbness of the death struggle had already laid hold of his robust body and paralyzed his lips and arms, and he could not reply even by a sound of tenderness to Maria-Gloriosa's wild lamentations and amorous cries. Neither reply nor smile, alas! But his eyes dilated, and glistened like the last flame that shoots up from an expiring fire, and filled them with a world of dying thoughts, of divine recollections, of delirious love. They appeared to envelope her in kisses, they spoke to her, they thanked her, they followed her movements, and seemed delighted at her grief. And as if she were replying to their mute supplications, as if she had understood them, Maria-Gloriosa suddenly tore off her lace, threw aside her fur cloak, stood erect beside the dying man, whose eyes were radiant, desirable in her supreme beauty with her bare shoulders, her bust like marble and her fair hair, in which diamonds glistened, surrounding her proud head, like that of the Goddess Diana, the huntress, and with her arms stretched out towards him in an attitude of love, of embrace and of blessing. He looked at her in ecstacy, he feasted on her beauty, and seemed to be having a terrible struggle with death, in order that he might gaze at her, that apparition of love, a little longer, see her beyond eternal sleep and prolong this unexpected dream. And when he felt that it was all over with him, and that even his eyes were growing dim, two great tears rolled down his cheeks. . . .

"When Maria-Gloriosa saw that he was dead, she piously and devoutly kissed his lips and closed his eyes, like a priest who closes the gold tabernacle after service, on an evening after benediction, and then, without exchanging a word, we returned through the darkness to the palace where the ball was still going on."

. . . . . .

There was a minute's silence, and while Madame de Laumières, who was very much touched by this story and whose nerves were rather highly strung, was drying her tears behind her open fan, suddenly the harsh and shrill voices of the fast women who were returning from the Casino, by the strange irony of fate, struck up an idiotic song which was then in vogue: *"Oh! the poor, oh! the poor, oh! the poor, dear girl!"*

THE RELICS

THEY had given him a grand public funeral, like they do victorious soldiers who have added some dazzling pages to the glorious annals of their country, who have restored courage to desponding heads and cast over other nations the proud shadow of their country's flag, like a yoke under which those went who were no longer to have a country, or liberty.

During a whole bright and calm night, when falling stars made people think of unknown metamorphoses and the transmigration of souls, who knows whether tall cavalry soldiers in their cuirasses and sitting as motionless as statues on their horses, had watched by the dead man's coffin, which was resting, covered with wreaths, under the porch of the heroes, every stone of which is engraved with the name of a brave man, and of a battle.

The whole town was in mourning, as if it had lost the only object that had possession of its heart, and which it loved. The crowd went silently and thoughtfully down the avenue of the *Champs Elysées,* and they almost fought for the commemorative medals and the common portraits which hawkers were selling, or climbed upon the stands which street boys had erected here and there, and whence they could see over the heads of the crowd. The *Place de la Concorde* had something solemn about it, with its circle of statues hung from head to foot with long crape coverings, which

looked in the distance like widows, weeping and praying.

According to his last wish, Jean Ramel had been conveyed to the Pantheon in the wretched paupers' hearse, which conveys them to the common grave at the shambling trot of some thin and broken-winded horse.

That dreadful, black conveyance without any drapery, without plumes and without flowers, which was followed by Ministers and deputies, by several regiments with their bands, and their flags flying above the helmets and the sabers, by children from the national schools, by delegates from the provinces, and an innumerable crowd of men in blouses, of women, of shopkeepers from every quarter, had a most theatrical effect, and while standing on the steps of the Pantheon, at the foot of the massive columns of the portico, the orators successively discanted on his apotheosis, tried to make their voices predominate over the noise, emphasized their pompous periods, and finished the performance by a poor third act, which makes people yawn and gradually empties the theater, people remembered who that man had been, on whom such posthumous honors were being bestowed, and who was having such a funeral: it was Jean Ramel.

Those three sonorous syllables called up a lionine head, with white hair thrown back in disorder, like a mane, with features that looked as if they had been cut out with a bill-hook, but which were so powerful, and in which there lay such a flame of life, that one forgot their vulgarity and ugliness; with black eyes under bushy eye-brows, which dilated and flashed like lightning, now were veiled as if in tears and then were filled with serene mildness, with a voice which now growled so as almost to terrify its hearers, and which would have

filled the hall of some working men's club, full of the thick smoke from strong pipes without being affected by it, and then would be soft, coaxing, persuasive and unctuous like that of a priest who is holding out promises of Paradise, or giving absolution for our sins.

He had had the good luck to be persecuted, to be in the eyes of the people, the incarnation of that lying formula which appears on every public edifice, of those three words of the *Golden Age,* which make those who think, those who suffer and those who govern, smile somewhat sadly, *Liberty, Fraternity, Equality.* Luck had been kind to him, had sustained, had pushed him on by the shoulders, and had set him up on his pedestal again when he had fallen down, like all idols do.

He spoke and he wrote, and always in order to announce the good news to all the multitudes who suffered — no matter to what grade of society they might belong — to hold out his hand to them and to defend them, to attack the abuses of the *Code* — that book of injustice and severity — to speak the truth boldly, even when it lashed his enemies as if it had been a whip.

His books were like Gospels, which are read chapter by chapter, and warmed the most despairing and the most sorrowing hearts, and brought comfort, hope and dreams to each.

He had lived very modestly until the end, and appeared to spend nothing; and he only kept one old servant, who spoke to him in the Basque dialect.

That chaste philosopher, who had all his life long feared women's snares and wiles, who had looked upon love as a luxury made only for the rich and idle, which unsettles the brain and interferes with acuteness of

thought, had allowed himself to be caught like an ordinary man, late in life, when his hair was white and his forehead deeply wrinkled.

It was not, however, as happens in the visions of solitary ascetics, some strange queen or female magician, with stars in her eyes and witchery in her voice, some loose woman who held up the symbolical lamp immodestly, to light up her radiant nudity, and the pink and white bouquet of her sweet-smelling skin, some woman in search of voluptuous pleasures, whose lascivious appeals it is impossible for any man to listen to, without being excited to the very depths of his being. Neither a princess out of some fairy tale, nor a frail beauty who was an expert in the art of reviving the ardor of old men, and of leading them astray, nor a woman who was disgusted with her ideals, that always turned out to be alike, and who dreamt of awakening the heart of one of those men who suffer, who have afforded so much alleviation to human misery, who seemed to be surrounded by a halo, and who never knew anything but the true, the beautiful and the good.

It was only a little girl of twenty, who was as pretty as a wild flower, who had a ringing laugh, white teeth, and a mind that was as spotless as a new mirror, in which no figure has been reflected as yet.

He was in exile at the time for having given public expression to what he thought, and he was living in an Italian village which was buried in chestnut trees and situated on the shores of a lake that was narrow and so transparent that it might have been taken for some nobleman's fish pond that was like an emerald in a large park. The village consisted of about twenty red-tiled

houses. Several paths paved with flint led up the side of the hill among the vines where the Madonna, full of grace and goodness extended her indulgence.

For the first time in his life Ramel remarked that there were some lips that were more desirable, more smiling than others, that there was hair in which it must be delicious to bury the fingers like in fine silk, and which it must be delightful to kiss, and that there were eyes which contained an infinitude of caresses, and he had spelled right through the eclogue, which at length revealed true happiness to him, and he had had a child, a son, by her.

This was the only secret that Ramel jealously concealed, and which no more than two or three of his oldest friends knew anything about, and while he hesitated about spending twopence on himself, and went to the Institute and to the Chamber of Deputies outside an omnibus, Pepa led the happy life of a millionaire who is not frightened of the to-morrow, and brought up her son like a little prince, with a tutor and three servants, who had nothing to do but to look after him.

All that Ramel made went into his mistress's hands, and when he felt that his last hour was approaching, and that there was no hope of his recovery — in full possession of his faculties and joy in his dull eyes — he gave his name to Pepa, and made her his lawful widow, in the presence of all his friends. She inherited everything that her former lover left behind, a considerable income from his share of the annual profits on his books, and also his pension, which the State continued to pay to her.

Little Ramel throve wonderfully amidst all this luxury, and gave free scope to his instincts and his caprices,

without his mother ever having the courage to reprove him in the least, and he did not bear the slightest resemblance to Jean Ramel.

Full of pranks, effeminate, a superfine dandy, and precociously vicious, he suggested the idea of those pages at the Court of Florence, whom we frequently meet with in *The Decameron,* and who were the playthings for the idle hands and tips of the patrician ladies.

He was very ignorant and lived at a great rate, bet on races, and played cards for heavy stakes with seasoned gamblers, old enough to be his father. And it was distressing to hear this lad joke about the memory of him whom he called *the old man,* and persecute his mother because of the worship and adoration which she felt for Jean Ramel, whom she spoke of as if he had become a demigod when he died, like in Roman theogony.

He would have liked altogether to have altered the arrangement of that kind of sanctuary, the drawing-room, where Pepa kept some of her husband's manuscripts, the furniture that he had most frequently used, the bed on which he had died, his pens, his clothes and his weapons. And one evening, not knowing how to dress himself up more originally than the rest for a masked ball that stout Toinette Danicheff was going to give as her house-warming, without saying a word to his mother, he took down the Academician's dress, the sword and cocked hat that had belonged to Jean Ramel, and put it on as if it had been a disguise on Shrove Tuesday.

Slightly built and with thin arms and legs, the wide clothes hung on him, and he was a comical sight with the embroidered skirt of his coat sweeping the carpet,

Effeminate, a superfine dandy.

and his sword knocking against his heels. The elbows and the collar were shiny and greasy from wear, for the *Master* had worn it until it was threadbare, to avoid having to buy another, and had never thought of replacing it.

He made a tremendous hit, and fair Liline Ablette laughed so at his grimaces and his disguise, that that night she threw over Prince Noureddin for him, although he had paid for her house, her horses and everything else, and allowed her six thousand francs a month — £240 — for extras and pocket money.

THE THIEF

"CERTAINLY," Dr. Sorbier exclaimed, who, while appearing to be thinking of something else, had been listening quietly to those surprising accounts of burglaries and of daring acts which might have been borrowed from the trial of Cartouche; "certainly, I do not know any viler fault, nor any meaner action than to attack a girl's innocence, to corrupt her, to profit by a moment of unconscious weakness and of madness, when her heart is beating like that of a frightened fawn, when her body, which has been unpolluted up till then, is palpitating with mad desire and her pure lips seek those of her seducer; when her whole being is feverish and vanquished, and she abandons herself without thinking of the irremediable stain, nor of her fall nor of the painful awakening on the morrow.

"The man who has brought this about slowly, viciously, and who can tell with what science of evil, and who, in such a case, has not steadiness and self-restraint enough to quench that flame by some icy words, who has not sense enough for two, who cannot recover his self-possession and master the runaway brute within him, and who loses his head on the edge of the precipice over which she is going to fall, is as contemptible as any man who breaks open a lock, or as any rascal on the lookout for a house left defenseless and without protection, or for some easy and profitable stroke of business, or as that thief whose various exploits you have just related to us.

" I, for my part, utterly, refuse to absolve him even when extenuating circumstances plead in his favor, even when he is carrying on a dangerous flirtation, in which a man tries in vain to keep his balance, not to exceed the limits of the game, any more than at lawn tennis; even when the parts are inverted and a man's adversary is some precocious, curious, seductive girl, who shows you immediately that she has nothing to learn and nothing to experience, except the last chapter of love, one of those girls from whom may fate always preserve our sons, and whom a psychological novel writer has christened *The Semi-Virgins.*

" It is, of course, difficult and painful for that coarse and unfathomable vanity which is characteristic of every man, and which might be called *malism,* not to stir such a charming fire, to act the Joseph and the fool, to turn away his eyes, and, as it were, to put wax into his ears, like the companions of Ulysses did when they were attracted by the divine, seductive songs of the sirens, just to touch that pretty table, covered with a perfectly new cloth, at which you are invited to take a seat before any one else, in such a suggestive voice, and are requested to quench your thirst and to taste that new wine, whose fresh and strange flavor you will never forget. But who would hesitate to exercise such self-restraint if, when he rapidly examined his conscience, in one of those instinctive returns to his sober self, in which a man thinks clearly and recovers his head; if he were to measure the gravity of his fault, think of his fault, think of its consequences, of the reprisals, of the uneasiness which he would always feel in the future, and which would destroy the repose and the happiness of his life?

" You may guess that behind all these moral reflec-

tions, such as a gray-beard like myself may indulge in, there is a story hidden, and sad as it is, I am sure it will interest you on account of the strange heroism that it shows."

He was silent for a few moments as if to classify recollections, and with his elbows resting on the arms of his easy chair, and his eyes looking into space, he continued in the slow voice of a hospital professor, who is explaining a case to his class of medical students, at a bedside:

"He was one of those men who, as our grandfathers used to say, never met with a cruel woman, the type of the adventurous knight who was always foraging, who had something of the scamp about him, but who despised danger and was bold even to rashness. He was ardent in the pursuit of pleasure, and a man who had an irresistible charm about him, one of those men in whom we excuse the greatest excesses, as the most natural things in the world. He had run through all his money at gambling and with pretty girls, and so became, as it were, a soldier of fortune, who amused himself whenever and however he could, and was at that time quartered at Versailles.

"I knew him to the very depths of his childish heart, which was only too easily penetrated and sounded, and I loved him like some old bachelor uncle loves a nephew who plays him some tricks, but who knows how to make him indulgent towards him, and how to wheedle him. He had made me his confidant far more than his adviser, kept me informed of his slightest tricks, though he always pretended to be speaking about one of his friends, and not about himself, and I must confess that his youthful impetuosity, his careless gaiety and his amorous ardor sometimes distracted my thoughts and

He had made me his confidant.

made me envy the handsome, vigorous young fellow who was so happy at being alive, so that I had not the courage to check him, to show him his right road, and to call out to him, 'Take care!' as children do at blind man's buff.

"And one day, after one of those interminable *cotillons,* where the couples do not leave each other for hours, but have the bridle on their neck and can disappear together without anybody thinking of taking notice of it, the poor fellow at last discovered what love was, that real love which takes up its abode in the very center of the heart and in the brain, and is proud of being there, and which rules like a sovereign and tyrannous master, and so he grew desperately enamored of a pretty, but badly brought up girl, who was as disquieting and as wayward as she was pretty.

"She loved him, however, or rather she idolized him despotically, madly, with all her enraptured soul, and all her excited person. Left to do as she pleased by imprudent and frivolous parents, suffering from *neurosis,* in consequence of the unwholesome friendships which she contracted at the convent-school, instructed by what she saw and heard and knew was going on around her, in spite of her deceitful and artificial conduct, knowing that neither her father nor her mother, who were very proud of their race, as well as avaricious, would ever agree to let her marry the man whom she had taken a liking to, that handsome fellow who had little besides visionary ideas and debts, and who belonged to the middle classes, she laid aside all scruples, thought of nothing but of belonging to him altogether, of taking him for her lover, and of triumphing over his desperate resistance as an honorable man.

" By degrees, the unfortunate man's strength gave way, his heart grew softened, his nerves became excited, and he allowed himself to be carried away by that current which buffeted him, surrounded him and left him on the shore like a waif and a stray.

" They wrote letters full of temptation and of madness to each other, and not a day passed without their meeting, either accidentally, as it seemed, or at parties and balls. She had given him her lips in long, ardent caresses, and she had sealed their compact of mutual passion with kisses of desire and of hope. And at last she brought him to her room, almost in spite of himself."

The doctor stopped, and his eyes suddenly filled with tears, as these former troubles came back to his mind, and then in a hoarse voice, he went on, full of horror of what he was going to relate:

" For months he scaled the garden wall, and holding his breath and listening for the slightest noise, like a burglar who is going to break into a house, he went in by the servants' entrance, which she had left open, went barefoot down a long passage and up the broad staircase, which creaked occasionally, to the second story, where his mistress's room was, and stopped there nearly the whole night.

" One night, when it was darker than usual, and he was making haste lest he should be later than the time agreed on, the officer knocked up against a piece of furniture in the ante-room and upset it. It so happened that the girl's mother had not gone to sleep yet, either because she had a sick headache, or else because she had sat up late over some novel, and frightened at that unusual noise which disturbed the silence of the house, she

jumped out of bed, opened the door, saw some one, indistinctly, running away and keeping close to the wall, and, immediately thinking that there were burglars in the house, she aroused her husband and the servants by her frantic screams. The unfortunate man knew what he was about, and seeing into what a terrible fix he had got, and preferring to be taken for a common thief to dishonoring his adored mistress and to betraying the secret of their guilty love, he ran into the drawing-room, felt on the tables and what-nots, filled his pockets at random with valuable gew-gaws, and then cowered down behind the grand piano, which barred up a corner of a large room.

"The servants who had run in with lighted candles, found him, and overwhelming him with abuse, seized him by the collar and dragged him, panting and appearing half dead with shame and terror, to the nearest police station. He defended himself with intentional awkwardness when he was brought up for trial, kept up his part with the most perfect self-possession, and without any signs of the despair and anguish that he felt in his heart, and condemned and degraded and made to suffer martyrdom in his honor as a man and as a soldier, he did not protest, but went to prison as one of those criminals whom society gets rid of, like noxious vermin.

"He died there of misery and of bitterness of spirit, with the name of the fair-haired idol, for whom he had sacrificed himself, on his lips, as if it had been an ecstatic prayer, and he entrusted his will to the priest who administered extreme unction to him, and requested him to give it to me. In it, without mentioning anybody, and without in the least lifting the veil, he at last explained

the enigma, and cleared himself of those accusations, the terrible burden of which he had borne until his last breath.

"I have always thought myself, though I do not know why, that the girl married and had several charming children, whom she brought up with the austere strictness, and in the serious piety of former days!"

A RUPTURE

"IT is just as I tell you, my dear fellow, those two poor things whom we all of us envied, who looked like a couple of pigeons when they are billing and cooing, and were always spooning until they made themselves ridiculous, now hate each other just as much as they used to adore each other. It is a complete break, and one of those which cannot be mended like you can an old plate! And all for a bit of nonsense, for something so funny that it ought to have brought them closer together and have made them amuse themselves together until they were ill. But how can a man explain himself when he is dying of jealousy, and when he keeps repeating to his terrified mistress, 'You are lying! you are lying!' When he shakes her, interrupts her while she is speaking, and says such hard things to her that at last she flies into a rage, has enough of it, becomes hard and mad, and thinks of nothing but of giving him tit for tat and of paying him out in his own coin; does not care a straw about destroying his happiness, sends everything to the devil, and talks a lot of bosh which she certainly does not believe. And then, because there is nothing so stupid and so obstinate in the whole world as lovers, neither he nor she will take the first steps, and own to having been in the wrong, and regret having gone too far; but both wait and watch and do not even write a few lines about nothing, which would restore peace. No, they let day succeed day, and there are feverish

and sleepless nights when the bed seems so hard, so cheerless and so large, and habits get weakened and the fire of love that was still smoldering at the bottom of the heart evaporates in smoke. By degrees both find some reason for what they wished to do, they think themselves idiots to lose the time which will never return in that fashion, and so good-bye, and there you are! That is how Josine Cadenette and that great idiot Servance separated."

Lalie Spring had lighted a cigarette, and the blue smoke played about her fine, fair hair, and made one think of those last rays of the setting sun which pierce through the clouds at sunset, and resting her elbows on her knees, and with her chin in her hand in a dreamy attitude, she murmured:

"Sad, isn't it?"

"Bah!" I replied, "at their age people easily console themselves, and everything begins over again, even love!"

"Well, Josine had already found somebody else . . ."

"And did she tell you her story?"

"Of course she did, and it is such a joke! . . . You must know that Servance is one of those fellows like one would wish to have when one has time to amuse oneself, and so self-possessed that he would be capable of ruining all the older ones in a girls' school, and given to trifling as much as most men, so that Josine calls him 'perpetual motion.' He would have liked to have gone on with his fun until the Day of Judgment, and seemed to fancy that beds were not made to sleep in at all, but she could not get used to being deprived of nearly all her rest, and it really made

her ill. But as she wished to be as conciliatory as possible, and to love and to be loved as ardently as in the past, and also to sleep off the effects of her happiness peacefully, she rented a small room in a distant quarter, in a quiet, shady street giving out that she had just come from the country, and put hardly any furniture into it except a good bed and a dressing table. Then she invented an old aunt for the occasion, who was ill and always grumbling, and who suffered from heart disease and lived in one of the suburbs, and so several times a week Josine took refuge in her sleeping place, and used to sleep late there as if it had been some delicious abode where one forgets the whole world. Sometimes they forgot to call her at the proper time; she got back late, tired, with red and swollen eyelids, involved herself in lies, contradicted herself and looked so much as if she had just come from the confessional, feeling horribly ashamed of herself, or, as if she had hurried home from some assignation, that at last Servance worried himself about it, thought that he was being made a fool of like so many of his comrades were, got into a rage and made up his mind to set the matter straight, and so discover who this aunt of his mistress's was, who had so suddenly fallen from the skies.

" He necessarily applied to an obliging agency, where they excited his jealousy, exasperated him day after day by making him believe that Josine Cadenette was making an absolute fool of him, had no more a sick aunt than she had any virtue, but that during the day she continued the little debaucheries which she committed with him at night, and that she shamelessly frequented some discreet bachelor's lodgings, where more than probably one of his own best friends was amusing him-

self at his expense, and having his share of the cake.

"He was fool enough to believe these fellows, instead of going and watching Josine himself, putting his nose into the business and going and knocking at the door of her room. He wanted to hear no more, and would not listen to her. For a trifle, in spite of her tears, he would have turned the poor thing into the streets, as if she had been a bundle of dirty linen. You may guess how she flew out at him and told him all sorts of things to annoy him; she let him believe he was not mistaken, that she had had enough of his affection, and that she was madly in love with another man. He grew very pale when she said that, looked at her furiously, clenched his teeth and said in a hoarse voice:

"'Tell me his name, tell me his name!'

"'Oh!' she said, chaffingly, 'you know him very well!' and if I had not happened to have gone in I think there would have been a tragedy . . . How stupid they are, and they were so happy and loved each other so . . . And now Josine is living with fat Schweinsshon, a low scoundrel who will live upon her and Servance has taken up with Sophie Labisque, who might easily be his mother; you know her, that bundle of red and yellow, who has been at that kind of thing for eighteen years, and whom Laglandée has christened, *'Sæcula sæculorum!'*"

"By Jove! I should rather think I did!"

"Tell me his name, tell me his name!"

A USEFUL HOUSE

ROYAUMONT'S fat sides shook with laughter at the mere recollection of the funny story that he had promised to his friends, and throwing himself back in the great armchair, which he completely filled, *that picker up of bits of pinchbeck,* as they called him at the club, at last said:

"It is perfectly true, Bordenave does not owe anyone a penny and can go through any street he likes and publish those famous memoirs of sheriff's officers, which he has been writing for the last ten years, when he did not dare to go out, and in which he carefully brought out the characters and peculiarities of all those generous distributors of stamped paper with whom he had had dealings, their tricks and wiles, their weaknesses, their jokes, their manner of performing their duties, sometimes with brutal rudeness and at others with cunning good nature, now embarrassed and almost ashamed of their work, and again ironically jovial, as well the artifices of their clerks to get a few crumbs from their employer's cake. The book will soon be published and Machin, the Vaudeville writer, has promised him a preface, so that it will be a most amusing work. You are surprised, eh? Confess that you are absolutely surprised, and I will lay you any bet you like that you will not guess how our excellent friend, whose existence is an inexplicable problem, has been able to settle with his creditors, and suddenly produce the requisite amount."

" Do get to the facts, confound it," Captain Hardeur said, who was growing tired of all this verbiage.

" All right, I will get to them as quickly as possible," Royaumont replied, throwing the stump of his cigar into the fire. " I will clear my throat and begin. I suppose all of you know that two better friends than Bordenave and Quillanet do not exist; neither of them could do without the other, and they have ended by dressing alike, by having the same gestures, the same laugh, the same walk and the same inflections of voice, so that one would think that some close bond united them, and that they had been brought up together from childhood. There is, however, this great difference between them, that Bordenave is completely ruined and that all that he possesses are bundles of mortgages, laughable parchments which attest his ancient race, and chimerical hopes of inheriting money some day, though these expectations are already heavily hypothecated. Consequently, he is always on the lookout for some fresh expedients for raising money, though he is superbly indifferent about everything, while Sebastien Quillanet, of the banking house of Quillanet Brothers, must have an income of eight thousand francs a year, but is descended from an obscure laborer who managed to secure some of the national property, then he became an army contractor, speculated on defeat as well as victory, and does not know now what to do with his money. But the millionaire is timid, dull and always bored, the ruined spendthrift amuses him by his impertinent ways, and his libertine jokes; he prompts him when he is at a loss for an answer, extricates him out of his difficulties, serves as his guide in the great forests of Paris which is strewn with so many pit-falls, and helps him to avoid

those vulgar adventures which socially ruins a man, no matter how well ballasted he may be. Then he points out to him what women would make suitable mistresses for him, who make a man noted, and have the effect of some rare and beautiful flower pinned into his buttonhole. He is the confidant of his intrigues, his guest when he gives small, special entertainments, his daily familiar table companion, and the buffoon whose sly humor one stimulates, and whose worst witticisms one tolerates."

"Really, really," the captain interrupted him, "you have been going on for more than a quarter of an hour without saying anything."

So Royaumont shrugged his shoulders and continued:

"Oh! you can be very tiresome when you please, my dear fellow! . . . Last year, when he was at daggers drawn with his people, who were deafening him with their recriminations, were worrying him and threatening him with a lot of annoyance, Quillanet got married. A marriage of reason, and which apparently changed his habits and his tastes, more especially as the banker was at that time keeping a perfect little marvel of a woman, a Parisian jewel of unspeakable attractions and of bewitching delicacy, that adorable Suzette Marly who is just like a pocket Venus, and who in some prior stage of her existence must have been Phryne or Lesbia. Of course he did not get rid of her, but as he was bound to take some judicious precautions, which are necessary for a man who is deceiving his wife, he rented a furnished house with a courtyard in front, and a garden at the back, which one might think had been built to shelter some amorous folly. It was the nest that he had dreamt of, warm, snug, elegant, the walls covered

with silk hangings of subdued tints, large pier-glasses, allegorical pictures, and filled with luxurious, low furniture that seemed to invite caresses and embraces. Bordenave occupied the ground floor, and the first floor served as a shrine for the banker and his mistress. Well, just a week ago, in order to hide the situation better, Bordenave asked Quillanet and some other friends to one of those luncheons which he understands so well how to order, such a delicious luncheon, that before it was quite over, every man had a woman on his knees already, and was asking himself whether a kiss from coaxing and naughty lips, was not a thousand times more intoxicating than the finest old brandy or the choicest vintage wines, and was looking at the bedroom door wishing to escape to it, although the Faculty altogether forbids that fashion of digesting a dainty repast, when the butler came in with an embarrassed look, and whispered something to him.

"Tell the gentleman that he has made a mistake, and ask him to leave me in peace," Bordenave replied to him in an angry voice. The servant went out and returned immediately to say that the intruder was using threats, that he refused to leave the house, and even spoke of having recourse to the commissary of police. Bordenave frowned, threw his table napkin down, upset two glasses and staggered out with a red face, swearing and stammering out:

"This is rather too much, and the fellow shall find out what going out of the window means, if he will not leave by the door." But in the ante-room he found himself face to face with a very cool, polite, impassive gentleman, who said very quietly to him:

" You are Count Robert de Bordenave, I believe. Monsieur? "

" Yes, Monsieur."

" And the lease that you signed at the lawyer's, Monsieur Albin Calvert, in the *Rue du Faubourg-Poissonnière,* is in your name, I believe? "

" Certainly, Monsieur."

" Then I regret extremely to have to tell you that if you are not in a position to pay the various accounts which different people have intrusted to me for collection here, I shall be obliged to seize all the furniture, pictures, plate, clothes etc., which are here, in the presence of two witnesses who are waiting for me downstairs in the street."

" I suppose this is some joke, Monsieur? "

" It would be a very poor joke, Monsieur le Comte, and one which I should certainly not allow myself towards you! "

The situation was absolutely critical and ridiculous, the more so, that in the dining-room the women who were slightly *elevated,* were tapping the wine glasses with their spoons, and calling for him. What could he do except to explain his misadventure to Quillanet, who became sobered immediately, and rather than see his shrine of love violated, his secret sin disclosed and his pictures, ornaments and furniture sold, gave a check in due form for the claim there and then, though with a very wry face. And in spite of this, some people will deny that men who are utterly cleared out, often have a stroke of luck.

THE ACCENT

IT was a large, upholstered house, with long white terraces shaded by vines, from which one could see the sea. Large pines stretched a dark dome over the sacked façade, and there was a look of neglect, of want and wretchedness about it all, such as irreparable losses, departures to other countries, and death leave behind them.

The interior wore a strange look, with half unpacked boxes serving for wardrobes, piles of band boxes, and for seats there was an array of worm-eaten armchairs, into which bits of velvet and silk, which had been cut from old dresses, had been festooned anyhow, and along the walls there were rows of rusty nails which made one think of old portraits and of pictures full of associations, which had one by one been bought for a low price by some second-hand furniture broker.

The rooms were in disorder and furnished no matter how, while velvets were hanging from the ceilings and in the corners, and seemed to show that as the servants were no longer paid except by hopes, they no longer did more than give them an accidental, careless touch with the broom occasionally. The drawing-room, which was extremely large, was full of useless knick-knacks, rubbish which is put up for sale at stalls at watering places, daubs, they could not be called paintings of portraits and of flowers, and an old piano with yellow keys.

Such is the home where she, who had been called the

handsome Madame de Maurillac, was spending her monotonous existence, like some unfortunate doll which inconstant, childish hands have thrown into a corner in a loft, she who, almost passed for a professional seductress, and whose coquetries, at least so the Faithful ones of the Party said, had been able to excite a passing and last spark of desire in the dull eyes of the Emperor.

Like so many others, she and her husband had waited for his return from Elba, had discounted a fresh, immediate chance, had kept up boldly and spent the remains of his fortune at that game of luxury.

On the day when the illusion vanished, and he was forced to awake from his dream, Monsieur de Maurillac, without considering that he was leaving his wife and daughter behind him almost penniless, but not being able to make up his mind to come down in the world, to vegetate, to fight against his creditors, to accept the derisive alms of some sinecure, poisoned himself, like a shop girl who is forsaken by her lover.

Madame de Maurillac did not mourn for him, and as this lamentable disaster had made her interesting, and as she was assisted and supported by unexpected acts of kindness, and had a good adviser in one of those old Parisian lawyers who would get anybody out of the most inextricable difficulties, she managed to save something from the wreck, and to keep a small income. Then reassured and emboldened, and resting her ultimate illusions and her chimerical hopes on her daughter's radiant beauty, and preparing for that last game in which they would risk everything, and perhaps also hoping that she might herself marry again, the ancient flirt arranged a double existence.

For months and months she disappeared from the world, and as a pretext for her isolation and for hiding herself in the country, she alleged her daughter's delicate health, and also the important interests she had to look after in the South of France.

Her frivolous friends looked upon that as a great act of heroism, as something almost super-human, and so courageous, that they tried to distract her by their incessant letters, religiously kept her up in all the scandal, and love adventures, in the falls, as well as in the apotheosis of the capital.

The difficult struggle which Madame de Maurillac had to keep up in order to maintain her rank, was really as fine as any of those campaigns in the twilight of glory, as those slow retreats where men only give way inch by inch and fight until the last cartridge is expended, until at last fresh troops arrive, reinforcement which bar the way to the enemy, and save the threatened flag.

Broken in by the same discipline, and haunted by the same dream, mother and daughter lived on almost nothing in the dull, dilapidated house which the peasants called the *château,* and economized like poor people who only have a few hundred francs a year to live on. But Fabienne de Maurillac developed well in spite of everything, and grew up into a woman like some rare flower which is preserved from all contact with the outer air and is reared in a hot-house.

In order that she might not lose her Parisian accent by speaking too much with the servants, who had remained peasants under their livery, Madame de Maurillac, who had not been able to bring a lady's maid with her, on account of the extra cost which her travel-

ing expenses and wages would have entailed, and who, moreover, was afraid that some indiscretion might betray her maneuvers and cover her with ridicule, made up her mind to wait on her daughter herself. And Fabienne talked with nobody but her, saw nobody but her, and was like a little novice in a convent. Nobody was allowed to speak to her, or to interfere with her walks in the large garden, or on the white terraces that were reflected in the blue water.

As soon as the season for the country and the seaside came, however, they packed up their trunks, and locked the doors of their house of exile. As they were not known, and taking those terrible trains which stop at every station, and by which travelers arrive at their destination in the middle of the night, with the certainty that nobody will be waiting for you, and see you get out of the carriage, they traveled third class, so that they might have a few bank notes the more, with which to make a show.

A fortnight in Paris in the family house at Auteuil, a fortnight in which to try on dresses and bonnets and to show themselves, and then Trouville, Aix or Biarritz, the whole show complete, with parties succeeding parties, money was spent as if they did not know its value, balls at the Casinos, constant flirtations, compromising intimacies, and those kind of admirers who immediately surround two pretty women, one in the radiant beauty of her eighteen years, and the other in the brightness of that maturity, which beautiful September days bring with them.

Unfortunately, however, they had to do the same thing over again every year, and as if bad luck were continuing to follow them implacably, Madame de

Maurillac and her daughter did not succeed in their endeavors, and did not manage during her usual absence from home, to pick up some nice fellow who fell in love immediately, who took them seriously, and asked for Fabienne's hand, consequently, they were very unhappy. Their energies flagged, and their courage left them like water that escapes, drop by drop, through a crack in a jug. They grew low-spirited and no longer dared to be open towards each other and to exchange confidences and projects.

Fabienne, with her pale cheeks, her large eyes with blue circles round them and her tight lips, looked like some captive princess who is tormented by constant ennui, and troubled by evil suggestions; who dreams of flight, and of escape from that prison where fate holds her captive.

One night, when the sky was covered with heavy thunderclouds and the heat was most oppressive, Madame de Maurillac called her daughter whose room was next to hers. After calling her loudly for some time in vain, she sprang out of bed in terror and almost broke open the door with her trembling hands. The room was empty, and the pillows untouched.

Then, nearly mad and foreseeing some irreparable misfortune, the poor woman ran all over the large house, and then rushed out into the garden, where the air was heavy with the scent of flowers. She had the appearance of some wild animal that is being pursued by a pack of hounds, tried to penetrate the darkness with her anxious looks, and gasped as if some one were holding her by the throat; but suddenly she staggered, uttered a painful cry and fell down in a fit.

There before her, in the shadow of the myrtle trees,

Fabienne was sitting on the knees of a man — of the gardener — with both her arms round his neck and kissing him ardently, and as if to defy her, and to show her how vain all her precautions and her vigilance had been, the girl was telling her lover in the country dialect, and in a cooing and delightful voice, how she adored him and that she belonged to him . . .

Madame de Maurillac is in a lunatic asylum, and Fabienne has married the gardener.

What could she have done better?

GHOSTS

JUST at the time when the *Concordat* was in its most flourishing condition, a young man belonging to a wealthy and highly respected middle class family went to the office of the head of the police at P——, and begged for his help and advice, which was immediately promised him.

"My father threatens to disinherit me," the young man then began, "although I have never offended against the laws of the State, of morality or of his paternal authority, merely because I do not share his blind reverence for the Catholic Church and her Ministers. On that account he looks upon me, not merely as Latitudinarian, but as a perfect Atheist, and a faithful old manservant of ours, who is much attached to me, and who accidentally saw my father's will, told me in confidence that he had left all his property to the Jesuits. I think this is highly suspicious, and I fear that the priests have been maligning me to my father. Until less than a year ago, we used to live very quietly and happily together, but ever since he has had so much to do with the clergy, our domestic peace and happiness are at an end."

"What you have told me," the official replied, "is as likely as it is regrettable, but I fail to see how I can interfere in the matter. Your father is in the full possession of all his mental faculties, and can dispose of all his property exactly as he pleases. I also think that your protest is premature; you must wait until his will can

legally take effect, and then you can invoke the aid of justice; I am sorry to say that I can do nothing for you."

"I think you will be able to," the young man replied; "for I believe that a very clever piece of deceit is being carried on here."

"How? Please explain yourself more clearly."

"When I remonstrated with him, yesterday evening, he referred to my dead mother, and at last assured me, in a voice of the deepest conviction, that she had frequently appeared to him, and had threatened him with all the torments of the damned, if he did not disinherit his son, who had fallen away from God, and leave all his property to the Church. Now I do not believe in ghosts."

"Neither do I," the police director replied; "but I cannot well do anything on this dangerous ground, if I had nothing but superstitions to go upon. You know how the Church rules all our affairs since the *Concordat* with Rome, and if I investigate this matter, and obtain no results, I am risking my post. It would be very different if you could adduce any proofs for your suspicions. I do not deny that I should like to see the clerical party, which will, I fear, be the ruin of Austria, receive a staggering blow; try, therefore, to get to the bottom of this business, and then we will talk it over again."

About a month passed, without the young Latitudinarian being heard of; but then he suddenly came one evening, evidently in a great state of excitement, and told him that he was in a position to expose the priestly deceit which he had mentioned, if the authorities would assist him. The police director asked for further information.

"I have obtained a number of important clues," the

young man said. "In the first place, my father confessed to me, that my mother did not appear to him in our house, but in the churchyard where she is buried. My mother was consumptive for many years, and a few weeks before her death she went to the village of S——, where she died and was buried. In addition to this, I found out from our footman, that my father has already left the house twice, late at night, in company of X——, the Jesuit priest, and that on both occasions he did not return till morning. Each time he was remarkably uneasy and low-spirited after his return, and had three masses said for my dead mother. He also told me just now, that he has to leave home this evening on business, but immediately he told me that, our footman saw the Jesuit go out of the house. We may, therefore, assume that he intends this evening to consult the spirit of my dead mother again, and this would be an excellent opportunity for getting on the track of the matter, if you do not object to opposing the most powerful force in the Empire, for the sake of such an insignificant individual as myself."

"Every citizen has an equal right to the protection of the State," the police director replied; "and I think that I have shown often enough, that I am not wanting in courage to perform my duty, no matter how serious the consequences may be; but only very young men act without any prospects of success, as they are carried away by their feelings. When you came to me the first time, I was obliged to refuse your request for assistance, but to-day your shares have risen in value. It is now eight o'clock, and I shall expect you in two hours' time, here in my office. At present, all you have

to do is to hold your tongue; everything else is my affair."

As soon as it was dark, four men got into a closed carriage in the yard of the police office, and were driven in the direction of the village of S——; their carriage, however, did not enter the village, but stopped at the edge of a small wood in the immediate neighborhood. Here they all four alighted; they were the police director, accompanied by the young Latitudinarian, a police sergeant and an ordinary policeman, who was, however, dressed in plain clothes.

"The first thing for us to do is to examine the locality carefully," the police director said; "it is eleven o'clock and the exorcisers of ghosts will not arrive before midnight, so we have time to look round us, and to take our measure."

The four men went to the churchyard, which lay at the end of the village, near the little wood. Everything was as still as death, and not a soul was to be seen. The sexton was evidently sitting in the public house, for they found the door of his cottage locked, as well as the door of the little chapel that stood in the middle of the churchyard.

"Where is your mother's grave?" the police director asked; but as there were only a few stars visible, it was not easy to find it, but at last they managed it, and the police director looked about in the neighborhood of it.

"The position is not a very favorable one for us," he said at last; "there is nothing here, not even a shrub, behind which we could hide."

But just then the policeman said that he had tried

to get into the sexton's hut through the door or the window, and that at last he had succeeded in doing so by breaking open a square in a window, which had been mended with paper, and that he had opened it and obtained possession of the key, which he brought to the police director.

His plans were very quickly settled. He had the chapel opened and went in with the young Latitudinarian; then he told the police sergeant to lock the door behind him and to put the key back where he had found it, and to shut the window of the sexton's cottage carefully. Lastly, he made arrangements as to what they were to do, in case anything unforeseen should occur, whereupon the sergeant and the constable left the churchyard, and lay down in a ditch at some distance from the gate, but opposite to it.

Almost as soon as the clock struck half-past eleven, they heard steps near the chapel, whereupon the police director and the young Latitudinarian went to the window, in order to watch the beginning of the exorcism, and as the chapel was in total darkness, they thought that they should be able to see, without being seen; but matters turned out differently from what they expected.

Suddenly, the key turned in the lock, and they barely had time to conceal themselves behind the altar, before two men came in, one of whom was carrying a dark lantern. One was the young man's father, an elderly man of the middle class, who seemed very unhappy and depressed, the other the Jesuit father K——, a tall, thin, big-boned man, with a thin, bilious face, in which two large gray eyes shone restlessly under their bushy, black eyebrows. He lit the tapers, which were standing on the altar, and then began to say a *Requiem Mass;*

while the old man knelt on the altar steps and served him.

When it was over, the Jesuit took the book of the Gospels and the holy water sprinkler, and went slowly out of the chapel, while the old man followed him, with the holy water basin in one hand and a taper in the other. Then the police director left his hiding place, and stooping down, so as not to be seen, he crept to the chapel window, where he cowered down carefully, and the young man followed his example. They were now looking straight on his mother's grave.

The Jesuit, followed by the superstitious old man, walked three times round the grave; then he remained standing before it, and by the light of the taper, he read a few passages from the Gospel; then he dipped the holy water sprinkler three times into the holy water basin, and sprinkled the grave three times; then both returned to the chapel, knelt down outside it with their faces towards the grave, and began to pray aloud, until at last the Jesuit sprang up, in a species of wild ecstasy, and cried out three times in a shrill voice:

"*Exsurge! Exsurge! Exsurge!*" [1]

Scarcely had the last word of the exorcism died away, when thick, blue smoke rose out of the grave, which rapidly grew into a cloud, and began to assume the outlines of a human body, until at last a tall, white figure stood behind the grave, and beckoned with its hand.

"Who art thou?" the Jesuit asked solemnly, while the old man began to cry.

"When I was alive, I was called Anna Maria B——," the ghost replied in a hollow voice.

[1] Arise!

"Will you answer all my questions?" the priest continued.

"As far as I can."

"Have you not yet been delivered from purgatory by our prayers, and all the masses for your soul, which we have said for you?"

"Not yet, but soon, soon I shall be."

"When?"

"As soon as that blasphemer, my son, has been punished."

"Has that not already happened? Has not your husband disinherited his lost son, and made the Church his heir, in his place?"

"That is not enough."

"What must he do besides?"

"He must deposit his will with the Judicial Authorities, as his last will and testament, and drive the reprobate out of his house."

"Consider well what you are saying. Must this really be?"

"It must, or otherwise I shall have to languish in purgatory much longer," the sepulchral voice replied with a deep sigh; but the next moment it yelled out in terror:

"Oh! Good Lord!" and the ghost began to run away as fast as it could. A shrill whistle was heard, and then another, and the police director laid his hand on the shoulder of the exorcisor, accompanied with the remark:

"You are in custody."

Meanwhile, the police sergeant and the policeman, who had come into the churchyard, had caught the ghost, and dragged it forward. It was the sexton, who

had put on a flowing, white dress, and who wore a wax mask, which bore striking resemblance to his mother, as the son declared.

When the case was heard, it was proved that the mask had been very skillfully made from a portrait of the deceased woman. The Government gave orders that the matter should be investigated as secretly as possible, and left the punishment of Father K—— to the spiritual authorities, which was a matter of course, at a time when priests were outside the jurisdiction of the Civil Authorities; and it is needless to say that he was very comfortable during his imprisonment, in a monastery in a part of the country which abounded with game and trout.

The only valuable result of the amusing ghost story was, that it brought about a reconciliation between father and son, and the former, as a matter of fact, felt such deep respect for priests and their ghosts in consequence of the apparition, that a short time after his wife had left purgatory for the last time, in order to talk with him, he turned *Protestant.*

CRASH

LOVE is stronger than death, and consequently also, than the greatest crash.

A young, and by no means bad-looking son of Palestine, and one of the barons of the Almanac of the *Ghetto,* who had left the field covered with wounds in the last general engagement on the Stock Exchange, used to go very frequently to the Universal Exhibition in Vienna in 1873, in order to divert his thoughts, and to console himself amidst the varied scenes, and the numerous objects of attraction there. One day he met a newly married couple in the Russian section, who had a very old coat of arms, but on the other hand, a very modest income.

This latter circumstance had frequently emboldened the stockbroker to make secret overtures to the delightful little lady; overtures which might have fascinated certain Viennese actresses, but which were sure to insult a respectable woman. The baroness, whose name appeared in the *Almanach de Gotha,* therefore felt something very like hatred for the man from the *Ghetto,* and for a long time her pretty little head had been full of various plans of revenge.

The stockbroker, who was really, and even passionately in love with her, got close to her in the Exhibition buildings, which he could do all the more easily, since the little woman's husband had taken to flight, foreseeing mischief, as soon as she went up to the show-case of

a Russian fur dealer, before which she remained standing in rapture.

"Do look at that lovely fur," the baroness said, while her dark eyes expressed her pleasure; "I must have it."

But she looked at the white ticket on which the price was marked.

"Four thousand roubles," she said in despair; "that is about six thousand florins."

"Certainly," he replied, "but what of that? It is a sum not worth mentioning in the presence of such a charming lady."

"But my husband is not in a position . . ."

"Be less cruel than usual for once," the man from the *Ghetto* said to the young woman in a low voice, "and allow me to lay this sable skin at your feet."

"I presume that you are joking."

"Not I . . ."

"I think you must be joking, as I cannot think that you intend to insult me."

"But, Baroness, I love you. . . ."

"That is one reason more why you should not make me angry."

"But . . ."

"Oh! I am in such a rage," the energetic little woman said; "I could flog you like *Venus in the Fur* [1] did her slave."

"Let me be your slave," the Stock Exchange baron replied ardently, "and I will gladly put up with everything from you. Really, in this sable cloak, and with a whip in your hand, you would make a most lovely picture of the heroine of that story."

[1] One of Sacher-Masoch's novels.— TRANSLATOR.

The baroness looked at the man for a moment with a peculiar smile.

"Then if I were to listen to you favorably, you would let me flog you?" she said after a pause.

"With pleasure."

"Very well," she replied quickly. "You will let me give you twenty-five cuts with a whip, and I will be yours after the twenty-fifth blow."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Fully."

The man from the *Ghetto* took her hand, and pressed it ardently to his lips.

"When may I come?"

"To-morrow evening at eight o'clock."

"And I may bring the sable cloak and the whip with me?"

"No, I will see about that myself."

The next evening the enamored stockbroker came to the house of the charming little Baroness, and found her alone, lying on a couch, wrapped in a dark fur, while she held a dog whip in her small hand, which the man from the *Ghetto* kissed.

"You know our agreement," she began.

"Of course I do," the Stock Exchange baron replied. "I am to allow you to give me twenty-five cuts with the whip, and after the twenty-fifth you will listen to me."

"Yes, but I am going to tie your hands first of all."

The amorous baron quietly allowed this new Delila to tie his hands behind him, and then at her bidding, he knelt down before her, and she raised her whip and hit him hard.

"Oh! That hurts me most confoundedly," he exclaimed.

"I mean it to hurt you," she said with a mocking laugh, and went on thrashing him without mercy. At last the poor fool groaned with pain, but he consoled himself with the thought that each blow brought him nearer to his happiness.

At the twenty-fourth cut, she threw the whip down.

"That only makes twenty-four," the beaten would-be, *Don Juan,* remarked.

"I will make you a present of the twenty-fifth," she said with a laugh.

"And now you are mine, altogether mine," he exclaimed ardently.

"What are you thinking of?"

"Have I not let you beat me?"

"Certainly; but I promised you to grant your wish after the twenty-fifth blow, and you have only received twenty-four," the cruel little bit of virtue cried, "and I have witnesses to prove it."

With these words, she drew back the curtains over the door, and her husband, followed by two other gentlemen came out of the next room, smiling. For a moment the stockbroker remained speechless on his knees before the beautiful woman; then he gave a deep sigh, and sadly uttered that one, most significant word:

"Crash!"

AN HONEST IDEAL

AMONG my numerous friends in Vienna, there is one who is an author, and who has always amused me by his childish idealism.

Not by his idealism from an abstract point of view, for in spite of my Pessimism I am an absurd Idealist, and because I am perfectly well aware of this, I as a rule never laugh at people's Idealism, but his sort of Idealism was really too funny.

He was a serious man of great capabilities who only just fell short of being learned, with a clear, critical intellect; a man without any illusions about Society, the State, Literature, or anything else, and especially not about women; but yet he was the craziest Optimist as soon as he got upon the subject of actresses, theatrical princesses and heroines; he was one of those men, who, like Hackländer, cannot discover the Ideal of Virtue anywhere, except in a ballet girl.

My friend was always in love with some actress or other; of course only Platonically, and from preference with some girl of rising talent, whose literary knight he constituted himself, until the time came when her admirers laid something much more substantial than laurel wreaths at her feet; then he withdrew and sought for fresh talent which would allow itself to be patronized by him.

He was never without the photograph of his ideal in his breast pocket, and when he was in a good temper he used to show me one or other of them, whom I had

never seen, with a knowing smile, and once, when we were sitting in a *café* in the *Prater,* he took out a portrait without saying a word, and laid it on the table before me.

It was the portrait of a beautiful woman, but what struck me in it first of all was not the almost classic cut of her features, but her white eyes.

"If she had not the black hair of a living woman, I should take her for a statue," I said.

"Certainly," my friend replied; "for a statue of Venus, perhaps for the Venus of Milo, herself."

"Who is she?"

"A young actress."

"That is a matter of course in your case; what I meant was, what is her name?"

My friend told me, and it was a name which is at present one of the best known on the German stage, with which a number of terrestrial adventures are connected, as every Viennese knows, with which those of Venus herself were only innocent toying, but which I then heard for the first time.

My idealist described her as a woman of the highest talent, which I believed, and as an angel of purity, which I did not believe; on that particular occasion, however, I at any rate did not believe the contrary.

A few days later, I was accidentally turning over the leaves of the portrait album of another intimate friend of mine, who was a thoroughly careless, somewhat dissolute Viennese, and I came across that strange female face with the dead eyes again.

"How did you come by the picture of this Venus?" I asked him.

"Well, she certainly is a Venus," he replied, "but

one of that cheap kind who are to be met with in the *Graben,*[1] which is their ideal grove. . . ."

"Impossible!"

"I give you my word of honor it is so."

I could say nothing more after that. So my intellectual friend's new ideal, that woman of the highest dramatic talent, that wonderful woman with the white eyes, was a street Venus!

But my friend was right in one respect. He had not deceived himself with regard to her wonderful dramatic gifts, and she very soon made a career for herself; far from being a mute character on a suburban stage, she rose in two years to be the leading actress at one of the principal theaters.

My friend interested himself on her behalf with the manager of it, who was not blinded by any prejudices. She acted in a rehearsal, and pleased him; whereupon he sent her to star in the provinces, and my friend accompanied her, and took care she was well puffed.

She went on the boards as Schiller's *Marie Stuart,* and achieved the most brilliant success, and before she had finished her starring tour, she obtained an engagement at a large theater in a Northern town, where her appearance was the signal for a triumphant success.

Her reputation, that is, her reputation as a most gifted actress, grew very high in less than a year, and the manager of the Court theater invited her to star at the Court theater.

She was received with some suspicion at first, but she soon overcame all prejudices and doubts; the applause grew more and more vehement at every act, and at the

[1] The street where most of the best shops are to be found, and much frequented by venial beauties.— TRANSLATOR.

close of the performance, her future was decided. She obtained a splendid engagement, and soon afterwards became an actress at the Court theater.

A well-known author wrote a racy novel, of which she was the heroine; one of the leading bankers and financiers was at her feet; she was the most popular personage, and the lioness of the capital; she had splendid apartments, and all her surroundings were of the most luxurious character, and she had reached that height in her career at which my idealistic friend, who had constituted himself her literary knight, quietly took his leave of her, and went in search of fresh talent.

But the beautiful woman with the dead eyes and the dead heart seemed to be destined to be the scourge of the Idealists, quite against her will, for scarcely had one unfolded his wings and flown away from her, than another fell out of the nest into her net.

A very young student, who was neither handsome, nor of good family, and certainly not rich or even well off, but who was enthusiastic, intellectual and impressionable, saw her as *Marie Stuart* in *The Maid of Orleans, The Lady with the Camelias,* and most of the plays of the best French play writers, for the manager was making experiments with her, and she was doing the same with her talents.

The poor student was enraptured with the celebrated actress, and at the same time conceived a passion for the woman, which bordered on madness.

He saved up penny by penny, he nearly starved himself, only in order that he might be able to pay for a seat in the gallery whenever she acted, and be able to devour her with his eyes. He always got a seat in the front row, for he was always outside three hours before the

doors opened, so as to be one of the first to gain his Olympus, the seat of the theatrical enthusiasts; he grew pale, and his heart beat violently when she appeared; he laughed when she laughed, shed tears when she wept, applauded her, as if he had been paid to do it by the highest favors that a woman can bestow, and yet she did not know him, and was ignorant of his very existence.

The regular frequenters of the Court theater noticed him at last, and spoke about his infatuation for her, until at last she heard about him, but still did not know him, and although he could not send her any costly jewelry, and not even a bouquet, yet at last he succeeded in attracting her attention.

When she had been acting and the theater had been empty for a long time, and she left it, wrapped in valuable furs and got into the carriage of her banker, which was waiting for her at the stage door, he always stood there, often up to his ankles in snow, or in the pouring rain.

At first she did not notice him, but when her maid said something to her in a whisper on one occasion, she looked round in surprise, and he got a look from those large eyes, which were not dead then, but dark and bright; a look which recompensed him for all his sufferings and filled him with proud hopes, which constantly gained more power over the young Idealist, who was usually so modest.

At last there was a thorough, silent understanding between the theatrical princess and the dumb adorer. When she put her foot on the carriage step, she looked round at him, and every time he stood there, devouring her with his eyes; she saw it and got contentedly into

He ran after the carriage, and reached her house when she did.

her carriage, but she did not see how he ran after the carriage, and how he reached her house, panting for breath, when she did, nor how he lay down outside after the door had closed behind her.

One stormy summer night, when the wind was howling in the chimneys, and the rain was beating against the windows and on the pavement, the poor student was again lying on the stone steps outside her house, when the front door was opened very cautiously and quietly; for it was not the banker who was leaving the house, but a wealthy young officer whom the girl was letting out; he kissed the pretty little Cerebus as he put a gold coin into her hand, and then accidentally trod on the Idealist, who was lying outside.

They all three simultaneously uttered a cry; the girl blew out the candle, the officer instinctively half drew his sword, and the student ran away.

Ever since that night, the poor, crazy fellow went about with a dagger, which he concealed in his belt, and it was his constant companion to the theater, and the stage door, when the actress's carriage used to wait for her, and to her house, where he nightly kept his painful watch.

His first idea was to kill his fortunate rival, then himself, then the theatrical princess, but at last, he lay down again outside her door, or stood on the pavement and watched the shadows that flitted hither and thither on her window, turned by the magic spell of the lovely actress.

And then, the most incredible thing happened, something which he could never have hoped for, and which he scarcely believed when it did occur.

One evening, when she had been playing a very im-

portant part, she kept the carriage waiting much longer than usual; but at last she appeared, and got into it; she did not shut the door, however, but beckoned to the young Idealist to follow her.

He was almost delirious with joy, just as a moment before he had been almost mad from despair, and obeyed her immediately, and during the drive he lay at her feet and covered her hands with kisses. She allowed it quietly and even merrily, and when the carriage stopped at her door, she let him lift her out of the carriage, and went upstairs leaning on his arm.

There, the lady's maid showed him into a luxuriously furnished drawing-room, while the actress changed her dress.

Presently she appeared in her dressing gown, sat down carelessly in an easy chair, and asked him to sit down beside her.

"You take a great interest in me?" she said.

"You are my ideal!" the student cried enthusiastically.

The theatrical princess smiled, and said:

"Well, I will at any rate be an honest ideal; I will not deceive you, and you shall not be able to say that I have misused your youthful enthusiasm. I will give myself to you. . . ."

"Oh! Heavens!" the poor Idealist exclaimed, throwing himself at her feet.

"Wait a moment! Wait a moment!" she said with a smile. "I have not finished yet. I can only love a man who is in a position to provide me with all those luxuries which an actress, or, if you like, which I cannot do without. As far as I know, you are poor, but I will belong to you, only for to-night, however, and in

return you must promise me not to rave about me, or to follow me, from to-night. Will you do this?"

The wretched Idealist was kneeling before her; he was having a terrible mental struggle.

"Will you promise me to do this?" she said again.

"Yes," he said, almost groaning.

The next morning a man, who had buried his Ideal, tottered downstairs. He was pale enough; almost as pale as a corpse; but in spite of this, he is still alive, and if he has any Ideal at all at present, it is certainly not a theatrical princess.

STABLE PERFUME

THREE ladies belonging to that class of society which has nothing useful to do, and therefore does not know how to employ its time sensibly, were sitting on a bench in the shade of some pine trees at Ischl, and were talking incidentally of their preference for all sorts of smells.

One of the ladies, Princess F——, a slim, handsome brunette, declared there was nothing like the smell of Russian leather; she wore dull brown Russian leather boots, a Russian leather dress suspender, to keep her petticoats out of the dirt and dust, a Russian leather belt which spanned her wasp-like waist, carried a Russian leather purse, and even wore a brooch and bracelet of gilt Russian leather; people declared that her bedroom was papered with Russian leather, and that her lover was obliged to wear high Russian leather boots and tight breeches, but that on the other hand, her husband was excused from wearing anything at all in Russian leather.

Countess H——, a very stout lady, who had formerly been very beautiful and of a very loving nature, but loving after the fashion of her time *à la* Parthenia and Griseldis, could not get over the vulgar taste of the young Princess. All she cared for was the smell of hay, and she it was who brought the scent *New Mown Hay* into fashion. Her ideal was a freshly mown field in the moonlight, and when she rolled slowly

along, she looked like a moving haystack, and exhaled an odor of hay all about her.

The third lady's taste was even more peculiar than Countess H——'s, and more vulgar than the Princess's, for the small, delicate, light-haired Countess W—— lived only for — the smell of stables. Her friends could absolutely not understand this; the Princess raised her beautiful, full arm with its broad bracelet to her Grecian nose and inhaled the sweet smell of the Russian leather, while the sentimental hay-rick exclaimed over and over again:

"How dreadful! What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?"

The delicate little Countess seemed very much embarrassed at the effect that her confession had had, and tried to justify her taste.

"Prince T—— told me that that smell had quite bewitched him once," she said; "it was in a Jewish town in Gallicia, where he was quartered once with his hussar regiment, and a number of poor, ragged circus riders, with half-starved horses came from Russia and put up a circus with a few poles and some rags of canvas, and the Prince went to see them, and found a woman among them, who was neither young nor beautiful, but bold and impudent; and the impudent woman wore a faded, bright red jacket, trimmed with old, shabby, imitation ermine, and that jacket stank of the stable, as the Prince expressed it, and she bewitched him with that odor, so that every time that the shameless wretch lay in his arms, and laughed impudently, and smelled abominably of the stable, he felt as if he were magnetized.

"How disgusting!" both the other ladies said, and involuntarily held their noses.

"What dost thou say to it, chaste moon?" the haystack said with a sigh, and the little light-haired Countess was abashed and held her tongue.

At the beginning of the winter season the three friends were together again in the gay, imperial city on the blue Danube. One morning the Princess accidentally met the enthusiast for the hay at the house of the little light-haired Countess, and the two ladies were obliged to go after her to her private riding-school, where she was taking her daily lesson. As soon as she saw them, she came up, and beckoned her riding-master to her to help her out of the saddle. He was a young man of extremely good and athletic build, which was set off by his tight breeches and his short velvet coat, and he ran up and took his lovely burden into his arms with visible pleasure, to help her off the quiet, perfectly broken horse.

When the ladies looked at the handsome, vigorous man, it was quite enough to explain their little friend's predilection for the smell of a stable, but when the latter saw their looks, she blushed up to the roots of her hair, and her only way out of the difficulty was to order the riding-master, in a very authoritative manner, to take the horse back to the stable. He merely bowed, with an indescribable smile, and obeyed her.

A few months afterwards, Viennese society was alarmed at the news that Countess W—— had been divorced from her husband. The event was all the more unexpected, as they had apparently always lived very happily together, and nobody was able to mention any man on whom she had bestowed even the most passing attention, beyond the requirements of politeness.

Long afterwards, however, a strange report became

current. A chattering lady's maid declared that the handsome riding-master had once so far forgotten himself as to strike the Countess with his riding-whip; a groom had told the Count of the occurrence, and when he was going to call the insolent fellow to account for it, the Countess covered him with her own body, and thus gave occasion for the divorce.

Years had passed since then and the Countess H—— had grow stouter and more sentimental. Ischl and hayricks were not enough for her any longer; she spent the winter on lovely *Lago Maggoire,* where she walked among laurel bushes and cypress trees, and was rowed about on the luke warm, moonlight nights.

One evening she was returning home in the company of an English lady who was also a great lover of nature, from *Isola Bella,* when they met a beautiful private boat in which a very unusual couple were sitting; a small, delicate, light-haired woman, wrapped in a white burnoose, and a handsome, athletic man, in tight, white breeches, a short, black velvet coat trimmed with sable, a red fez on his head, and a riding whip in his hand.

Countess K—— involuntarily uttered a loud exclamation.

"What is the matter with you?" the English lady asked. "Do you know those people?"

"Certainly! She is a Viennese lady," Countess H—— whispered; "Countess W——."

"Oh! Indeed you are quite mistaken; it is a Count Savelli and his wife. They are a handsome couple, don't you think so?"

When the boat came nearer, she saw that in spite of that, it was little Countess W—— and that the handsome man was her former riding-master, whom she had

married, and for whom she had bought a title from the Pope; and as the two boats passed each other, the short sable cloak, which was thrown carelessly over his shoulders, exhaled, like the old cat's skin jacket of that impudent female circus rider, a strong *stable perfume.*

THE ILL-OMENED GROOM

AN impudent theft, to a very large amount, had been committed in the Capital. Jewels, a valuable watch set with diamonds, his wife's miniature in a frame enchased with brilliants, and a considerable sum in money, the whole amounting in value to a hundred and fifteen thousand florins, had been stolen. The banker himself went to the Director of Police [1] to give notice of the robberies, but at the same time he begged as a special favor that the investigation might be carried on as quietly and considerately as possible, as he declared that he had not the slightest ground for suspecting anybody in particular, and did not wish any innocent person to be accused.

"First of all, give me the names of all the persons who regularly go into your bedroom," the police director said.

"Nobody, except my wife, my children, and Joseph, my valet, a man for whom I would answer as I would for myself."

"Then you think him absolutely incapable of committing such a deed?"

"Most decidedly I do," the banker replied.

"Very well; then can you remember whether on the day on which you first missed the articles that have been stolen, or on any days immediately preceding it, any-

[1] Head of the Criminal Investigation Department.— TRANSLATOR.

body who was not a member of your household, happened by chance to go to your bed-room?"

The banker thought for a moment, and then said with some hesitation:

"Nobody, absolutely nobody."

The experienced official, however, was struck by the banker's slight embarrassment and momentary blush, so he took his hand, and looking him straight in the face, he said:

"You are not quite candid with me; somebody was with you, and you wish to conceal the fact from me. You must tell me everything."

"No, no; indeed there was nobody here."

"Then at present, there is only one person on whom any suspicion can rest — and that is your valet."

"I will vouch for his honesty," the banker replied immediately.

"You may be mistaken, and I shall be obliged to question the man."

"May I beg you to do it with every possible consideration?"

"You may rely upon me for that."

An hour later, the banker's valet was in the police director's private room, who first of all looked at his man very closely, and then came to the conclusion that such an honest, unembarrassed face, and such quiet, steady eyes could not possibly belong to a criminal.

"Do you know why I have sent for you?"

"No, your Honor."

"A large theft has been committed in your master's house," the police director continued, "from his bedroom. Do you suspect anybody? Who has been into the room, within the last few days?"

"Nobody but myself, except my master's family."

"Do you not see, my good fellow, that by saying that, you throw suspicion on yourself?"

"Surely, sir," the valet exclaimed, "you do not believe . . ."

"I must not believe anything; my duty is merely to investigate and to follow up any traces that I may discover," was the reply. "If you have been the only person to go into the room within the last few days, I must hold you responsible."

"My master knows me . . ."

The police director shrugged his shoulders: "Your master has vouched for your honesty, but that is not enough for me. You are the only person on whom, at present, any suspicion rests, and therefore I must — sorry as I am to do so — have you arrested."

"If that is so," the man said, after some hesitation, "I prefer to speak the truth, for my good name is more to me than my situation. Somebody was in my master's apartments yesterday."

"And this somebody was . . .?"

"A lady."

"A lady of his acquaintance?"

The valet did not reply for some time.

"It must come out," he said at length. "My master keeps a woman — you understand, sir, a pretty, fair woman; and he has furnished a house for her and goes to see her, but secretly of course, for if my mistress were to find it out, there would be a terrible scene. This person was with him yesterday."

"Were they alone?"

"I showed her in, and she was in his bedroom with him; but I had to call him out after a short time, as

his confidential clerk wanted to speak to him, and so she was in the room alone for about a quarter of an hour."

"What is her name?"

"Cæcelia K——; she is a Hungarian." At the same time the valet gave him her address.

Then the director of police sent for the banker, who, on being brought face to face with his valet, was obliged to acknowledge the truth of the facts which the latter had alleged, painful as it was for him to do so; whereupon orders were given to take Cæcelia K—— into custody.

In less than half an hour, however, the police officer who had been dispatched for that purpose, returned and said that she had left her apartments, and most likely the Capital also, the previous evening. The unfortunate banker was almost in despair. Not only had he been robbed of a hundred and fifty thousand florins, but at the same time he had lost the beautiful woman, whom he loved with all the passion of which he was capable. He could not grasp the idea that a woman whom he had surrounded with Asiatic luxury, whose strangest whims he had gratified, and whose tyranny he had borne so patiently, could have deceived him so shamefully, and now he had a quarrel with his wife, and an end of all domestic peace, into the bargain.

The only thing the police could do was to raise the hue and cry after the lady, who had denounced herself by her flight, but it was all of no use. In vain did the banker, in whose heart hatred and thirst for revenge had taken the place of love, implore the Director of Police to employ every means to bring the beautiful criminal to justice, and in vain did he undertake to be responsible for all the costs of her prosecution, no matter how

heavy they might be. Special police officers were told off to try and discover her, but Cæcelia K—— was so rude as not to allow herself to be caught.

Three years had passed, and the unpleasant story appeared to have been forgotten. The banker had obtained his wife's pardon and — what he cared about a good deal more — he had found another charming mistress, and the police did not appear to trouble themselves about the beautiful Hungarian any more.

We must now change the scene to London. A wealthy lady who created much sensation in society, and who made many conquests both by her beauty and her free behavior, was in want of a groom. Among the many applicants for the situation, there was a young man, whose good looks and manners gave people the impression that he must have been very well educated. This was a recommendation in the eyes of the lady's maid, and she took him immediately to her mistress's boudoir. When he entered, he saw a beautiful, voluptuous looking woman, at most, twenty-five years of age, with large, bright eyes and blue-black hair, which seemed to increase the brilliancy of her fair complexion, lying on a sofa. She looked at the young man, who also had thick black hair, and who turned his glowing black eyes to the ground, beneath her searching gaze. with evident satisfaction, and she seemed particularly taken with his slender, athletic build, and then she said half lazily and half proudly:

"What is your name?"

"Lajos Mariassi."

"A Hungarian?"

And there was a strange look in her eyes.

"Yes."

"How did you come here?"

"I am one of the many emigrants who have forfeited their country and their life; and I, who come of a good family, and who was an officer of the Honveds, must now . . . go into service, and thank God if I find a mistress who is at the same time beautiful and an aristocrat, as you are."

Miss Zoë — that was the lovely woman's name — smiled, and at the same time showed two rows of pearly teeth.

"I like your looks," she said, "and I feel inclined to take you into my service, if you are satisfied with my terms."

"A lady's whim," her maid said to herself, when she noticed the ardent looks which Miss Zoë gave her manservant, "which will soon pass away." But that experienced female was mistaken that time.

Zoë was really in love, and the respect with which Lajos treated her, put her into a very bad temper. One evening, when she intended to go to the Italian Opera, she countermanded her carriage, and refused to see her noble adorer, who wished to throw himself at her feet, and ordered her groom to be sent up to her boudoir.

"Lajos," she began, "I am not at all satisfied with you."

"Why, Madame?"

"I do not wish to have you about me any longer; here are your wages for three months. Leave the house immediately." And she began to walk up and down the room, impatiently.

"I will obey you, Madame," the groom replied, "but I shall not take my wages."

"Why not?" she asked hastily.

"Because then I should be under your authority for three months," Lajos said, "and I intend to be free, this very moment, so that I may be able to tell you that I entered your service, not for the sake of your money, but because I love and adore a beautiful woman in you."

"You love me!" Zoë exclaimed. "Why did you not tell me sooner? I merely wished to banish you from my presence, because I love you, and did not think that you loved me. But you shall smart for having tormented me so. Come to my feet immediately."

The groom knelt before the lovely girl, whose moist lips sought his at the same instant.

From that moment Lajos became her favorite. Of course he was not allowed to be jealous, as the young lord was still her official lover, who had the pleasure of paying everything for that licentious beauty, and besides him, there was a whole army of so-called "good friends," who were fortunate enough to obtain a smile now and then, and occasionally, something more, and who, in return, had permission to present her with rare flowers, a parrot or diamonds.

The more intimate Zoë became with Lajos, the more uncomfortable she felt when he looked at her, as he frequently did, with undisguised contempt. She was wholly under his influence and was afraid of him, and one day, while he was playing with her dark curls, he said jeeringly:

"It is usually said that contrasts usually attract each other, and yet you are as dark as I am."

She smiled, and then tore off her black curls, and immediately the most charming, fair-haired woman was sitting by the side of Lajos, who looked at her attentively, but without any surprise.

He left his mistress at about midnight, in order to look after the horses, as he said, and she put on a very pretty nightdress and went to bed. She remained awake for fully an hour, expecting her lover, and then she went to sleep, but in two hours' time she was roused from her slumbers, and saw a police inspector and two constables by the side of her magnificent bed.

"Whom do you want?" she cried.

"Cæcelia K——."

"I am Miss Zoë."

"Oh! I know you," the Inspector said with a smile; "be kind enough to take off your dark locks, and you will be Cæcelia K——. I arrest you in the name of the law."

"Good heavens!" she stammered, "Lajos has betrayed me."

"You are mistaken, Madame," the Inspector replied; "he has merely done his duty."

"What? Lajos . . . my lover?"

"No, Lajos, the detective."

Cæcelia got out of bed, and the next moment she sank fainting onto the floor.

She allowed a Hungarian magnate to make love to her.

AN EXOTIC PRINCE

IN the forthcoming reminiscences, a lady will frequently be mentioned who played a great part in the annals of the police from 1848 to 1866, and we will call her *Wandà von Chabert.* Born in Galicia of German parents, and carefully brought up in every way, she married a rich and handsome officer of noble birth, from love, when she was sixteen. The young couple, however, lived beyond their means, and when her husband died suddenly, two years after they were married, she was left anything but well off.

As Wanda had grown accustomed to luxury and amusement, the quiet life in her parents' house did not suit her any longer, and even while she was still in mourning for her husband, she allowed a Hungarian magnate to make love to her, and she went off with him at a venture, and continued the same extravagant life which she had led when her husband was alive, at her own authority. At the end of two years, however, her lover left her in a town in North Italy, almost without means, and she was thinking of going on the stage, when chance provided her with another resource, which enabled her to reassure her position in society. She became a secret police agent, and soon was one of their most valuable members. In addition to the proverbial charms and wit of a Polish woman, she also possessed high linguistic attainments, and she spoke Polish, Russian, French, German, English and Italian, almost equally fluently and correctly; then she had also that en-

cyclopædic polish, which impresses most people much more than the most profound learning of a specialist. She was very attractive in appearance, and she knew how to set off her good looks by all the arts of dress and coquetry.

In addition to this, she was a woman of the world in the widest sense of the term; pleasure-loving, faithless, unstable, and therefore never in any danger of really losing her heart, and consequently her head. She used to change the place of her abode, according to what she had to do. Sometimes she lived in Paris among the Polish emigrants, in order to find out what they were doing, and maintained intimate relations with the Tuileries and the Palais Royal at the same time; then she went to London for a short time, or hurried off to Italy, to watch the Hungarian exiles, only to reappear suddenly in Switzerland, or at one of the fashionable German watering-places.

In revolutionary circles, she was looked upon as an active member of the great *League of Freedom,* and diplomatists regarded her as an influential friend of Napoleon III.

She knew every one, but especially those men whose names were to be met with every day, in the papers, and she reckoned Victor Emmanuel, Rouher, Gladstone, and Gortschakoff among her friends, as well as Mazzini, Kossuth, Garibaldi, Mieroslawsky and Bakunin.

In the spring of 185— she was at Vevey, on the lovely lake of Geneva, and went into raptures when talking to an old German diplomatist about the beauties of nature, and about Calame, Stifter and Turgenev, whose "Diary of a Hunter" had just become fashionable.

One day a man appeared at the *table d'hôte,* who excited unusual attention, and hers especially, so that there was nothing strange in her asking the proprietor of the hotel what his name was; and she was told that he was a wealthy Brazilian, and that his name was Don Escovedo.

Whether it was an accident, or whether he responded to the interest which the young woman felt for him, at any rate she constantly met him wherever she went, when she was taking a walk, or was on the lake, or was looking at the newspapers in the reading room; and at last she was obliged to confess to herself that he was the handsomest man she had ever seen. Tall, slim, and yet muscular, the young, beardless Brazilian had a head which any woman might envy him; features which were not only beautiful and noble, but were also extremely delicate, with dark eyes which possessed a wonderful charm, and thick, auburn curly hair, which completed the attractiveness and the strangeness of his appearance.

They soon became acquainted, through a Prussian officer, whom the Brazilian had requested to introduce him to the beautiful Polish lady — for Frau von Chabert was taken for one in Vevey — and she, cold and designing as she was, blushed slightly when he stood before her for the first time; and when he gave her his arm he could feel her hand tremble slightly on it. The same evening they went out riding together, the next he was lying at her feet, and on the third she was his. For four weeks the lovely Wanda and the Brazilian lived together as if they had been in Paradise, but he could not deceive her searching eyes any longer.

For her sharp and practiced gaze had already discov-

ered in him that indefinable something which makes a man appear a suspicious character. Any other woman would have been pained and horrified at such a discovery, but she found the strange consolation in it, that her handsome adorer had promised also to become a very interesting object for her pursuit, and so she began systematically to watch the man who lay unsuspectingly at her feet.

She soon found out that he was no conspirator, but she asked herself in vain whether she was to look for a common swindler, an impudent adventurer or perhaps even a criminal in him. The day that she had foreseen soon came; the Brazilian's banker "unaccountably" had omitted to send him any money, and so he borrowed some of her. "So he is a male courtesan," she said to herself; and the handsome man soon required money again, and she lent it to him, until at last he left suddenly, and nobody knew where he had gone to; only this much, that he had left Vevey as the companion of an old but wealthy Wallachian lady; and so this time, clever Wanda was duped.

A year afterwards she met the Brazilian unexpectedly at Lucca, with an insipid-looking, light-haired, thin Englishwoman on his arm. Wanda stood still and looked at him steadily, but he glanced at her quite indifferently; he did not choose to know her again.

The next morning, however, his valet brought her a letter from him, which contained the amount of his debt in Italian hundred liri notes, which were accompanied by a very cool excuse. Wanda was satisfied, but she wished to find out who the lady was, in whose company she constantly saw Don Escovedo.

"Don Escovedo."

An Austrian count, who had a loud and silly laugh, said:

"Who has saddled you with that yarn? The lady is Lady Nitingsdale, and his name is Romanesco."

"Romanesco?"

"Yes, he is a rich Boyar from Moldavia, where he has extensive estates."

Romanesco kept a faro bank in his apartments, and he certainly cheated, for he nearly always won; it was not long, therefore, before other people in good society at Lucca shared Madame von Chabert's suspicions, and consequently Romanesco thought it advisable to vanish as suddenly from Lucca as Escovedo had done from Vevey, and without leaving any more traces behind him.

Some time afterwards, Madame von Chabert was on the island of Heligoland, for the sea-bathing; and one day she saw Escovedo-Romanesco sitting opposite to her at the *table d'hôte,* in very animated conversation with a Russian lady; only his hair had turned black since she had seen him last. Evidently his light hair had become too compromising for him.

"The sea water seems to have a very remarkable effect upon your hair," Wanda said to him spitefully, in a whisper.

"Do you think so?" he replied, condescendingly.

"I fancy that at one time your hair was fair."

"You are mistaking me for somebody else," the Brazilian replied, quietly.

"I am not."

"For whom do you take me, pray?" he said with an insolent smile.

"For Don Escovedo."

"I am Count Dembizki from Valkynia," the former

Brazilian said with a bow; "perhaps you would like to see my passport."

"Well, perhaps . . ."

And at last, he had the impudence to show her his false passport.

A year afterwards, Wanda met Count Dembizki in Baden, near Vienna. His hair was still black, but he had a magnificent, full, black beard; he had become a Greek prince, and his name was Anastasio Maurokordatos. She met him once in one of the side walks in the park, where he could not avoid her. "If it goes on like this," she called out to him in a mocking voice, "the next time I see you, you will be king of some negro tribe or other."

That time, however, the Brazilian did not deny his identity; on the contrary, he surrendered at discretion, and implored her not to betray him, and as she was not revengeful, she pardoned him, after enjoying his terror for a time, and promised him that she would hold her tongue, as long as he did nothing contrary to the laws.

"First of all, I must beg you not to gamble."

"You have only to command; and we do not know each other in future?"

"I must certainly insist on that," she said maliciously.

The Exotic Prince had, however, made the conquest of the charming daughter of a wealthy Austrian Count, and had cut out an excellent young officer who was wooing her; and he, in his despair began to make love to Frau von Chabert, and at last told her he loved her, but she only laughed at him.

"You are very cruel," he stammered in confusion.

"I? What are you thinking about?" Wanda replied, still smiling; "all I mean is, that you have directed

your love to the wrong address, for Countess . . ."

"Do not speak of her; she is engaged to another man."

"As long as I choose to permit it," she said; "but what will you do, if I bring her back to your arms? Will you still call me cruel?"

"Can you do this?" the young officer asked, in great excitement.

"Well, supposing I can do it, what shall I be then?"

"An angel, whom I shall thank on my knees."

A few days later, the rivals met at a coffee house; the Greek prince began to lie and boast, and the Austrian officer gave him the lie direct, and in consequence, it was arranged that they should fight a duel with pistols next morning in a wood close to Baden. But as the officer was leaving the house with his second the next morning, a Police Commissary came up to him and begged him not to trouble himself any further about the matter, but another time to be more careful before accepting a challenge.

"What does it mean?" the officer asked, in some surprise.

"It means that this Maurokordatos is a dangerous swindler and adventurer, whom we have just taken into custody."

"He is not a prince?"

"No; a circus rider."

An hour later the officer received a letter from the charming Countess, in which she humbly begged for pardon; the happy lover set off to go and see her immediately, but on the way a sudden thought struck him, and so he turned back in order to thank beautiful Wanda, as he had promised, on his knees.

VIRTUE IN THE BALLET

IT is a strange feeling of pleasure that the writer about the stage and the characters of the theatrical feels, when he occasionally discovers a good, honest human heart in the twilight behind the scenes. Of all the witches and semi-witches of that eternal *Walpurgis night,* whose boards represent the world, the ladies of the ballet have at all times and in all places been regarded at least like saints, although Hackländer repeatedly told in vain in his earlier novels, to convince us that true virtue appears in tights and short petticoats and is only to be found in ballet girls. I fear that the popular voice is right as a general rule, but is equally true that here and there one finds a pearl in the dust, and even in the dirt, and the short story that I am about to relate, will best illustrate my assertion.

Whenever a new, youthful dancer appeared at the Vienna Opera House, the *habitués* began to go after her, and did not rest, until the fresh young rose had been plucked by some hand or other, though often it was old and trembling. For how could those young and pretty, sometimes even beautiful girls who, with every right to life, love and pleasure, were poor and had to subsist on a very small salary, resist the seduction of the smell of flowers and of the flash of diamonds? And if one resisted it, it was love, some real, strong passion, that gave her the strength for this, generally, however, only to go after luxury all the

more shamelessly and selfishly, when her lover forsook her.

At the beginning of the winter season of 185— the pleasing news was spread among the *habitués,* that a girl of dazzling beauty was going to appear very shortly in the ballet at the Court Theater. When the evening came, nobody had yet seen that much discussed phenomenon, but report spread her name from mouth to mouth; it was Satanella. The moment when the troop of elastic figures in fluttering petticoats jumped onto the stage, every opera-glass in the boxes and stalls was directed on the stage, and at the same instant the new dancer was discovered, although she timidly kept in the background.

She was one of those girls who are surrounded by the bright halo of virginity, but who at the same time present a splendid type of womanhood; she had the voluptuous form of Rubens' second wife, whom they called, not untruly, the risen Green Helen, and her head with its delicate nose, its small full mouth, and its dark inquiring eyes, reminded people of the celebrated picture of the Flemish Venus in the *Belvedere* in Vienna.

She took the old guard of the Vienna Court Theater by storm, and the very next morning a perfect shower of *billets doux,* jewels and bouquets fell into the poor ballet girl's attic. For a moment she was dazzled by all this splendor and looked at the gold bracelets, the brooches set with rubies and emeralds, and at the sparkling earrings, with flushed cheeks, but then an unspeakable terror of being lost and of sinking into degradation, seized her, and she pushed the jewels

away and was about to send them back. But as is usual in such cases, her mother intervened in favor of *the generous gentlemen,* and so the jewels were accepted, but the notes which accompanied them were not answered at present. A second and a third discharge of Cupid's artillery followed, without making any impression on that virtuous girl; in consequence a greater number of her admirers grew quiet, though some continued to send her presents, and to assail her with love letters, and one had the courage to go still further.

He was a wealthy banker, who had just called on the mother of Henrietta, as we will call the fair-haired ballet girl, and then one evening, quite unexpectedly, on the girl herself. He by no means met with the reception which he had expected from the pretty girl in a faded cotton gown; Henrietta treated him with a certain amount of good humored respect, which had a much more unpleasant effect on him than that coldness and prudery, which is so often synonymous with coquetry and selfish speculation, among a certain class of women. In spite of everything, however, he soon went to see her daily, and lavished his wealth, without her asking him for anything, on the beautiful dancer, and he gave her no chance of refusing, for he relied on the mother for everything. She took pretty, small apartments for her daughter and herself in the *Kärntnerstrasse* and furnished them elegantly, hired a cook and housemaid, made an arrangement with a fly-driver, and lastly clothed her daughter's lovely limbs in silk, velvet and valuable lace.

Henrietta persistently held her tongue at all this;

only once she said to her mother in the presence of the Stock Exchange *Jupiter:*

"Have you won a prize in the lottery?"

"Of course, I have," her mother replied with a laugh.

The girl, however, had given away her heart long before, and quite contrary to all precedent, to a man whose very name she was ignorant of, and who sent her no diamonds, and not even any flowers. But he was young and good-looking, and stood so retiringly, and so evidently in love, at the small side door of the Opera House every night, when she got out of her antediluvian rickety fly, and also when she got into it again after the performance, that she could not help noticing him. Soon, he began to follow her wherever she went, and once he summoned up courage to speak to her, when she had been to see a friend in a remote suburb. He was very nervous, but she thought all that he said very clear and logical, and she did not hesitate for a moment to confess that she returned his love.

"You have made me the happiest, and at the same time the most wretched of men," he said after a pause.

"What do you mean?" she said innocently.

"Do you not belong to another man?" he asked her in a sad voice.

She shook her abundant, light curls.

"Up till now, I have belonged to myself alone, and I will prove it to you, by requesting you to call upon me frequently and without restraint. Everyone shall know that we are lovers. I am not ashamed of belonging to an honorable man, but I will not sell myself."

"But your splendid apartments, and your dresses," her lover interposed shyly, "you cannot pay for them out of your salary."

"My mother has won a large prize in the lottery, or made a hit on the Stock Exchange." And with these words, the determined girl cut short all further explanations.

That same evening the young man paid his first visit, to the horror of the girl's mother, who was so devoted to the Stock Exchange, and he came again the next day, and nearly every day. Her mother's reproaches were of no more avail than Jupiter's furious looks, and when the latter one day asked for an explanation as to *certain visits,* the girl said proudly:

"That is very soon explained. He loves me as I love him, and I presume you can guess the rest."

And he certainly did guess the rest, and disappeared, and with him the shower of gold ceased.

The mother cried and the daughter laughed. "I never gave the worn out old rake any hopes, and what does it matter to me, what bargain you made with him? I always thought that you had been lucky on the Stock Exchange. Now, however, we must seriously consider about giving up our apartments, and make up our minds to live as we did before."

"Are you really capable of making such a sacrifice for me, to renounce luxury and to have my poverty?" her lover said.

"Certainly I am! Is not that a matter of course when one loves?" the ballet girl replied in surprise.

"Then let me inform you, my dear Henrietta," he said, "that I am not so poor as you think; I only wished to find out, whether I could make myself loved for my

own sake, I have done so. I am Count L——, and though I am a minor and dependent on my parents, yet I have enough to be able to retain your pretty rooms for you, and to offer you, if not a luxurious, at any rate a comfortable existence."

On hearing this, Mamma dried her tears immediately. Count L—— became the girl's acknowledged lover, and they passed the happiest hours together. Unselfish as the girl was, she was yet such a thoroughly ingenuous Viennese, that, whenever she saw anything that took her fancy, whether it was a dress, a cloak or one of those pretty little ornaments for a side table, she used to express her admiration in such terms, as forced her lover to make her a present of the object in question. In this way, Count L—— incurred enormous debts, which his father paid repeatedly; at last, however, he inquired into the cause of all this extravagance, and when he discovered it, he gave his son the choice of giving up his connection with the dancer, or of relinquishing all claims on the paternal money box.

It was a sorrowful evening, when Count L—— told his mistress of his father's determination.

"If I do not give you up, I shall be able to do nothing for you," he said at last, "and I shall not even know how I should manage to live myself, for my father is just the man to allow me to want, if I defy him. That, however, is a very secondary consideration; but as a man of honor, I cannot bind you, who have every right to luxury and enjoyment, to myself, from the moment when I cannot even keep you from want, and so I must set you at liberty."

"But I will not give you up," Henrietta said proudly.

The young Count shook his head sadly.

"Do you love me?" the ballet girl said, quickly.

"More than my life."

"Then we will not separate, as long as I have anything," she continued.

And she would not give up her connection with him, and when his father actually turned Count L—— into the street, she took her lover into her own lodgings. He obtained a situation as a copyist clerk in a lawyer's office, and she sold her valuable dresses and jewels, and so they lived for more than a year.

The young man's father did not appear to trouble his head about them, but nevertheless he knew everything that went on in their small home, and knew every article that the ballet girl sold; until at last, softened by such love and strength of character, he himself made the first advances to a reconciliation with his son.

At the present time, Henrietta wears the diamonds which formerly belonged to the old Countess, and it is long since she was a ballet girl, for now she sits by the side of her husband in a carriage on whose panels their armorial bearings are painted.

IN HIS SWEETHEART'S LIVERY

AT present she is a great lady, an elegant, intellectual woman, a celebrated actress; but in the year 1847, when our story begins, she was a beautiful, but not very moral girl, and then it was that the young, talented Hungarian poet, who was the first to discover her gifts for the stage, made her acquaintance.

The slim, ardent girl, with her bright, brown hair and her large blue eyes, attracted the careless poet, and he loved her, and all that was good and noble in her nature, put forth fresh buds and blossoms in the sunshine of his poetic love.

They lived in an attic in the old Imperial city on the Danube, and she shared his poverty, his triumphs and his pleasures, and she would have become his true and faithful wife, if the Hungarian revolution had not torn him from her arms.

The poet became the soldier of freedom, and followed the Magyar tricolor, and the Honved drums, while she was carried away by the current of the movement in the capital, and she might have been seen discharging her musket, like a brave Amazon, at the Croats, who were defending the town against Görgey's assaulting battalions.

But at last Hungary was subdued, and was governed as if it had been a conquered country.

It was said that the young poet had fallen at Temesvar, and his mistress wept for him, and married another man, which was nothing either new or extraordinary.

Her name was now Frau von Kubinyi, but her married life was not happy; and one day it occurred to her that her lover had told her that she had talent for the stage, and whatever he said, had always proved correct, so she separated from her husband, studied a few parts, appeared on the stage, and the public, the critics, actors and literature were lying at her feet.

She obtained a very profitable engagement, and her reputation increased with every part she played; and before the end of a year after her first appearance, she was the lioness of society. Everybody paid homage to her, and the wealthiest men tried to obtain her favors; but she remained cold and reserved, until the General commanding the district, who was a handsome man of noble bearing, and a gentleman in the highest sense of the word, approached her.

Whether she was flattered at seeing that powerful man, before whom millions trembled, and who had to decide over the life and death, the honor and happiness of so many thousands, fettered by her soft curls, or whether her enigmatical heart for once really felt what true love was, suffice it to say, that in a short time she was his acknowledged mistress, and her princely lover surrounded her with the luxury of an Eastern queen.

But just then a miracle occurred — the resurrection of a dead man. Frau von Kubinyi was driving through the *Corso* in the General's carriage; she was lying back negligently in the soft cushions, and looking carelessly at the crowd on the pavement. Then, she caught sight of a common Austrian soldier and screamed out aloud.

Nobody heard that cry, which came from the depths of a woman's heart, nobody saw how pale and how ex-

cited that woman was, who usually seemed made of marble, not even the soldier who was the cause of it. He was a Hungarian poet, who, like so many other *Honveds,*[1] now wore the uniform of an Austrian soldier.

Two days later, to his no small surprise he was told to go to the General in command, as orderly, and when he reported himself to the adjutant, he told him to go to Frau von Kubinyi's, and to await her orders.

Our poet only knew her by report, but he hated and despised the beautiful woman, who had sold herself to the enemy of the country, most intensely; he had no choice, however, but to obey.

When he arrived at her house, he seemed to be expected, for the porter knew his name, took him into his lodge, and without any further explanation, told him immediately to put on the livery of his mistress, which was lying there ready for him. He ground his teeth, but resigned himself without a word to his wretched, though laughable fate; it was quite clear that the actress had some purpose in making the poet wear her livery. He tried to remember whether he could formerly have offended her by his notices as a theatrical critic, but before he could arrive at any conclusion, he was told to go and show himself to Frau von Kubinyi.

She evidently wished to enjoy his humiliation.

He was shown into a small drawing-room, which was furnished with an amount of taste and magnificence such as he had never seen before, and was told to wait. But he had not been alone many minutes,

[1] A Hungarian word, meaning literally, Defender of the Fatherland. The term *Honved* is applied to the Hungarian *Landnehr,* or Militia.— TRANSLATOR.

before the door-curtains were parted and Frau von Kubinyi came in, calm but deadly pale, in a splendid dressing gown of some Turkish material, and he recognized his former mistress.

"Irma!" he exclaimed.

The cry came from his heart, and it also affected the heart of the woman, who was surfeited with pleasure, so greatly that the next moment she was lying on the breast of the man whom she had believed to be dead, but only for a moment, and then he freed himself from her.

"We are fated to meet again thus!" she began.

"Not through any fault of mine," he replied bitterly.

"And not through mine either," she said quickly; "everybody thought that you were dead, and I wept for you; that is my justification."

"You are really too kind," he replied sarcastically. "How can you condescend to make any excuses to me? I wear your livery, and you have to order, and I have to obey; our relative positions are clear enough."

Frau von Kubinyi turned away to hide her tears.

"I did not intend to hurt your feelings," he continued: "but I must confess that it would have been better for both of us, if we had not met again. But what do you mean by making me wear your livery? It is not enough that I have been robbed of my happiness? Does it afford you any pleasure to humiliate me as well?"

"How can you think that?" the actress exclaimed. "Oh! Ever since I have discovered your unhappy lot, I have thought of nothing but the means of delivering

you from it, and until I succeed in doing this, however, I can at least make it more bearable for you."

"I understand," the unhappy poet said with a sneer. "And in order to do this, you have begged your present worshiper, to turn your former lover into a footman."

"What a thing to say to me!"

"Can you find any other plea?"

"You wish to punish me for having loved you, idolized you, I suppose?" the painter continued. "So exactly like a woman! But I can perfectly well understand that the situation promises to have a fresh charm for you . . ."

Before he could finish what he was saying, the actress quickly left the room; he could hear her sobbing, but he did not regret his words, and his contempt and hatred for her only increased, when he saw the extravagance and the princely luxury with which she was surrounded. But what was the use of his indignation? He was wearing her livery, he was obliged to wait upon her and to obey her, for she had the corporal's cane at her command, and it really seemed as if he incurred the vengeance of the offended woman; as if the General's insolent mistress wished to make him feel her whole power; as if he were not to be spared the deepest humiliation.

The General and two of Frau von Kubinyi's friends, who were servants of the Muses like she was, for one was a ballet dancer, and the two others were actresses, had come to tea, and he was to wait on them.

While it was getting ready, he heard them laughing in the next room, and the blood flew to his head, and when the butler opened the door Frau von Kubinyi

appeared on the General's arm; she did not, however, look at her new footman, her former lover, triumphantly or contemptuously, but she gave him a glance of the deepest commiseration.

Could he after all have wronged her?

Hatred and love, contempt and jealousy were struggling in his breast, and when he had to fill the glasses, the bottle shook in his hand.

"Is this the man?" the General said, looking at him closely.

Frau von Kubinyi nodded.

"He was evidently not born for a footman," the General added.

"And still less for a soldier," the actress observed.

These words fell heavily on the unfortunate poet's heart, but she was evidently taking his part, and trying to rescue him from his terrible position.

Suspicion, however, once more gained the day.

"She is tired of all pleasures, and satisfied with enjoyment," he said to himself; "she requires excitement and it amuses her to see the man whom she formerly loved, and who, as she knows, still loves her, tremble before her. And when she pleases she can see me tremble; not for my life, but for fear of the disgrace which she can inflict upon me at the moment if it should give her any pleasure."

But suddenly the actress gave him a look which was so sad and so imploring, that he looked down in confusion.

From that time he remained in her house without performing any duties, and without receiving any orders from her; in fact he never saw her, and did not venture to ask after her, and two months had passed in this way,

when the General unexpectedly sent for him. He waited, with many others, in the ante-room, and when the General came back from parade, he saw him and beckoned him to follow, and as soon as they were alone, he said:

"You are free, as you have been allowed to purchase your discharge."

"Good heavens!" the poet stammered, "how am I to . . ."

"That is already done," the General replied. "You are free."

"How is it possible? How can I thank your Excellency!"

"You owe me no thanks," he replied; "Frau von Kubinyi bought you out."

The poor poet's heart seemed to stop; he could not speak, nor even stammer a word; but with a low bow, he rushed out and tore wildly through the streets, until he reached the mansion of the woman whom he had so misunderstood, quite out of breath; he must see her again, and throw himself at her feet.

"Where are you going to?" the porter asked him.

"To Frau von Kubinyi's."

"She is not here."

"Not here?"

"She has gone away."

"Gone away? Where to?"

"She started for Paris two hours ago."

DELILA

IN a former reminiscence,[1] we made the acquaintance of a lady, who had done the police many services in former years, and whom we called Wanda von Chabert. It is no exaggeration, if we say that she was at the same time the cleverest, the most charming and the most selfish woman whom one could possibly meet. She was certainly not exactly what is called beautiful, for neither her face nor her figure were symmetrical enough for that, but if her head was not beautiful in the style of the antique, neither like the *Venus* of Milo nor Ludoirsi's *Juno,* it was, on the other hand, in the highest sense delightful like the ladies whom Wateau and Mignard painted. Everything in her little face, and in its frame of soft brown hair was attractive and seductive, her low, Grecian forehead, her bright, almond shaped eyes, her small nose, and her full, voluptuous lips, her middling height and her small waist with its, perhaps, almost too full bust, and above all her walk, that half indolent, half coquettish swaying of her broad hips, were all maddeningly alluring.

And this woman, who was born for love, was as eager for pleasure and as amorous as few other women have even been, but for that very reason she never ran any danger of allowing her victims to escape her from pity; on the contrary, she soon grew tired of each of her favorites, and her connection with the police was then

[1] An Exotic Prince.

extremely useful to her, in order to get rid of an inconvenient, or jealous lover.

Before the war between Austria and Italy in 1859, Frau von Chabert was in London, where she lived alone in a small, one-storied house with her servants, and was in constant communication with emigrants from all countries.

She herself was thought to be a Polish refugee, and the luxury by which she was surrounded, and a fondness for sport, and above all for horses, which was remarkable even in England, made people give her the title of Countess. At that period Count T—— was one of the most prominent members of the Hungarian propaganda, and Frau von Chabert was commissioned to pay particular attention to all he said and did; but in spite of all the trouble she took, she had not hitherto even succeeded in making his acquaintance. He lived the life of a misanthrope, quite apart from the great social stream of London, and he was not believed to be either gallant, or ardent in love. Fellow-countrymen of his, who had known him formerly, during the Magyar revolution, described him as very cautious, cold and silent, so that if any man possessed a charm against the toils, which she set for him, it was he.

Just then it happened that as Wanda was riding in Hyde Park quite early one morning before there were many people about, her thoroughbred English mare took fright, and threatened to throw the plucky rider, who did not for a moment lose her presence of mind, from the saddle. Before her groom had time to come to her assistance, a man in a Hungarian braided coat rushed from the path, and caught hold of the animal's reins. When the mare had grown quite quiet, he

was about to go away with a slight bow, but Frau von Chabert detained him, so that she might thank him, and so had leisure to examine him more closely. He was neither young nor handsome, but was well-made, like all Hungarians are, and had an interesting and very expressive face. He had a sallow complexion, which was set off by a short, black full beard, and he looked as if he were suffering, while he fixed two, great, black fanatical eyes on the beautiful young woman, who was smiling at him so amiably, and it was the strange look in those large eyes which aroused in the soul of the woman who was so excitable, that violent, but passing feeling which she called *love*. She turned her horse and accompanied the stranger on his side, and he seemed to be even more charmed by her chatter than by her appearance, for his grave face grew more and more animated, and at last he himself became quite friendly and talkative. When he took leave of her, Wanda gave him her card, on the back of which her address was written, and he immediately gave her his in return.

She thanked him and rode off, looking at his name as she did so; it was Count T——.

She felt inclined to give a shout of pleasure when she found that the noble quarry, which she had been hunting so long, had at last come into her preserves, but she did not even turn her head round to look at him, such was the command which that woman had over herself and her movements.

Count T—— called upon her the very next day, soon he came every day, and in less than a month after that innocent adventure in Hyde Park, he was at her feet; for when Frau von Chabert made up her mind to be

loved, nobody was able to withstand her. She became the Count's confidante almost as speedily as she had become his mistress, and every day, and almost every hour, she, with the most delicate coquetry, laid fresh fetters on the Hungarian Samson. Did she love him?

Certainly she did, after her own fashion, and at first she had not the remotest idea of betraying him; she even succeeded in completely concealing her connection with him, not only in London but also in Vienna.

Then the war of 1859 broke out, and like most Hungarian and Polish refugees, Count T—— hurried off to Italy, in order to place himself at the disposal of that great and patriotic Piedmontese statesman, Cavour.

Wanda went with him, and took the greatest interest in his revolutionary intrigues in Turin; for some time she seemed to be his right hand, and it looked as if she had become unfaithful to her present patrons. Through his means, she soon became on intimate terms with Piedmontese government circles, and that was his destruction.

A young Italian diplomatist, who frequently negotiated with Count T——, or in his absence, with Wanda, fell madly in love with the charming Polish woman, and she, who was never cruel, more especially when she herself had caught fire, allowed herself to be conquered by the handsome, intellectual, daring man. In measure as her passion for the Italian increased, so her feelings for Count T—— declined, and at last she felt that her connection with him was nothing but a hindrance and a burden, and as soon as Wanda had reached that point, her adorer was as good as lost.

Count T—— was not a man whom she could just

coolly dismiss, or with whom she might venture to trifle, and that she knew perfectly well; so in order to avoid a catastrophe, the consequences of which might be incalculable for her, she did not let him notice the change in her feelings towards him at first, and kept the Italian, who belonged to her, at a proper distance.

When peace had been concluded, and the great, peaceful revolution, which found its provisional settlement in the Constitution of February and in the Hungarian agreement, began in Austria, the Hungarian refugees determined to send Count T—— to Hungary, that he might assume the direction of affairs there. But as he was still an outlaw, and as the death sentence of Arab hung over his head like the sword of Damocles, he consulted with Wanda about the ways and means of reaching his fatherland unharmed and of remaining there undiscovered. Although that clever woman thought of a plan immediately, yet she told Count T—— that she would think the matter over, and she did not bring forward her proposition for a few days, which was then, however, received by the Count and his friends with the highest approval, and was immediately carried into execution. Frau von Chabert went to Vienna as Marchioness Spinola, and T—— accompanied her as her footman; he had cut his hair short, and shaved off his beard; so that in his livery, he was quite unrecognizable. They passed the frontier in safety, and reached Vienna without any interference from the authorities; and there they first of all went to a small hotel, but soon took a small, handsome flat in the center of the town. Count T—— immediately hunted up some members of his party, who

had been in constant communication with the emigrants since Vilagos, and the conspiracy was soon in excellent train, while Wanda whiled away her time with a hussar officer, without, however, losing sight of her lover and of his dangerous activity, for a moment, on that account.

And at last, when the fruit was ripe for falling into her lap, she was sitting in the private room of the Minister of Police, opposite to the man with whom she was going to make the evil compact.

"The emigrants must be very uneasy and disheartened at an agreement with, and reconciliation to, Hungary," he began.

"Do not deceive yourself," Frau von Chabert replied; "nothing is more dangerous in politics than optimism, and the influence of the revolutionary propaganda was never greater than it is at present. Do not hope to conciliate the Magyars by half concessions, and, above all things, do not underestimate the movement, which is being organized openly, in broad daylight."

"You are afraid of a revolution?"

"I know that they are preparing for one, and that they expect everything from that alone."

The skeptical man smiled.

"Give me something besides views and opinions, and then I will believe. . . ."

"I will give you the proof," Wanda said, "but before I do you the greatest service that lies in my power, I must be sure that I shall be rewarded for all my skill and trouble."

"Can you doubt it?"

"I will be open with you," Wanda continued.

"During the insurrectionary war in Transylvania, Urban had excellent spies, but they have not been paid to this day. I want money. . . ."

"How much?"

With inimitable ease, the beautiful woman mentioned a very considerable sum. The skeptical man got up to give a few orders, and a short time afterwards the money was in Wanda's hands.

"Well?"

"The emigrants have sent one of their most influential and talented members to organize the revolution in Hungary."

"Have they sent him already?"

"More than that, for Count T—— is in Vienna at this moment."

"Do you know where he is hiding?"

"Yes."

"And you are sure that you are not mistaken?"

"I am most assuredly not mistaken," she replied with a frivolous laugh; "Count T——, who was my admirer in London and Turin, is here in my house, as my footman."

An hour later, the Count was arrested. But Wanda only wished to get rid of her tiresome adorer, and not to destroy him. She had been on the most intimate terms with him long enough, and had taken part in his political plans and intrigues, to be able to give the most reliable information about him personally, as well as about his intentions, and that information was such that, in spite of the past, and of the Count's revolutionary standpoint, they thought they had discovered in him the man who was capable of bringing about a real reconciliation between the monarch and his people. In con-

sequence of this, T——, who thought that he had incurred the gallows, stood in the Emperor's presence, and the manner in which the latter expressed his generous intentions with regard to Hungary, carried the old rebel away, and he gave him his word of honor that he would bring the nation back to him, reconciled. And he kept his word, although, perhaps, not exactly in the sense in which he gave it.

He was allowed full liberty in going to Hungary, and Wanda accompanied him. He had no suspicion that even in his mistress's arms he was under police supervision, and from the moment when he made his appearance in his native land officially, as the intermediary between the crown and the people, she had a fresh interest in binding a man of such importance, whom everybody regarded as Hungary's future Minister-President, to herself.

He began to negotiate, and at first everything went well, but soon the yielding temper of the government gave rise continually to fresh demands, and before long, what one side offered and the other side demanded, was so far apart, that no immediate agreement could be thought of. The Count's position grew more painful every day; he had pledged himself too deeply to both sides, and in vain he sought for a way out of the difficulty.

Then one day the Minister of Police unexpectedly received a letter from Wanda, in which she told him that T——, urged on by his fellow-countrymen, and branded as a traitor by the emigrants, was on the point of heading a fresh conspiracy.

Thereupon, the government energetically reminded that thoroughly honest and noble man of his word of

honor, and T——, who saw that he was unable to keep it, ended his life by a pistol bullet.

Frau von Chabert left Hungary immediately after the sad catastrophe, and went to Turin, where new lovers, new splendors and new laurels awaited her.

We may, perhaps, hear more of her.

A MESALLIANCE

IT is a generally acknowledged truth, that the prerogatives of the nobility are only maintained at the present time through the weakness of the middle classes, and many of these who have established themselves and their families by their intellect, industry and struggles, get into a state of bliss, which reminds those who see it, of intoxication, as soon as they are permitted to enter aristocratic circles, or can be seen in public with barons and counts; and above all, when these treat them in a friendly manner, no matter from what motive, or when they see a prospect of a daughter of theirs driving in a carriage with armorial bearings on the panels, as a countess.

Many women and girls of the citizen class would not hesitate for a moment to refuse an honorable, good-looking man of their own class, in order to go to the altar with the oldest, ugliest and stupidest dotard among the aristocracy.

I shall never forget saying in a joke to a young, well-educated girl of a wealthy, middle-class family, who had the figure and bearing of a queen, shortly before her marriage, not to forget an ermine cloak in her trousseau.

"I know it would suit me capitally," she replied in all seriousness, "and I should certainly have worn one, if I had married Baron R——, which I was nearly doing, as you know, but it is not suitable for the wife of a government official."

When a girl of the middle classes wanders from the paths of virtue, her fall may, as a rule, be rightly ascribed to her hankering after the nobility.

In a small German town there lived, some years ago, a tailor, whom we will call Löwenfuss, a man who, like all knights of the shears, was equally full of aspirations after culture and liberty. After working for one master for some time as a poor journeyman, he married his daughter, and after his father-in-law's death, he succeeded to his business, and as he was industrious, lucky and managed it well, he soon grew very well off, and was in a position to give his daughters an education, for which many a nobleman's daughters might have envied them; for they learned, not only French and music, but had also acquired many more solid branches of knowledge, and as they were both pretty and charming girls, they soon became very much thought of and sought after.

Fanny, the eldest, especially, was her father's pride and the favorite of society; she was of middle height, slim, with a thoroughly maidenly figure, and with almost an Italian face, in which two large, dark eyes seemed to ask for love and submission at the same time; and yet the girl with the plentiful, black hair was not in the least intended to command, for she was one of those romantic women who will give themselves, or even throw themselves, away, but who can never be subjugated. A young physician fell in love with her, and wished to marry her; Fanny returned his love, and her parents gladly accepted him as a son-in-law, but she made it a condition that he should visit her freely and frequently for two years, before she would consent to become his wife, and she declared that she would not

go to the altar with him, until she was convinced that not only their hearts, but also that their characters harmonized. He agreed to her wish, and became a regular visitor at the house of the educated tailor; they were happy hours for the lovers; they played, sang and read together, and he told the girl some things from his medical experiences, which excited and moved her.

Just then, one day an officer went to the tailor's house, to order some civilian's clothes. This was not an unusual event in itself, but it was soon to be the cause of one; for accidentally the daughter of *the artist in clothes* came into the shop, just as the officer was leaving it, and on seeing her, he let go of the door-handle, and asked the tailor who the young lady was.

"My daughter," the tailor said, proudly.

"May I beg you to introduce me to the young lady, Herr Löwenfuss?" the hussar said.

"I feel flattered at the honor you are doing me," the tailor replied, with evident pleasure.

"Fanny, the Captain wishes to make your acquaintance; this is my daughter, Fanny, Captain . . ."

"Captain Count Kasimir W——," the hussar interrupted him, as he went up to the pretty girl, and paid her a compliment or two. They were very commonplace, stale, every-day phrases, but in spite of this, they flattered the girl, intelligent as she was, extremely, because it was a cavalry officer and a Count to boot who addressed them to her. And when, at last, the Captain, in the most friendly manner, asked the tailor's permission to be allowed to visit at the house, both father and daughter granted it to him most readily.

The very next day Count W—— paid his visit, in full dress uniform, and when Mamma Löwenfuss made

some observations about it, how handsome it was, and how well it became him, he told them that he should not wear it much longer, as he intended to quit the service soon, and to look for a wife, in whom birth and wealth were matters of secondary consideration, while a good education and a knowledge of domestic matters were of paramount importance; adding that as soon as he had found one, he meant to retire to his estates.

From that moment, Papa and Mamma Löwenfuss looked upon the Count as their daughter's suitor; it is certain that he was madly in love with Fanny; he used to go to their house every evening, and made himself so liked by all of them, that the young doctor soon felt himself to be superfluous, and so his visits became rarer and rarer. The Count confessed his love to Fanny on a moonlight night, while they were sitting in an arbor covered with honeysuckle, which formed nearly the whole of Herr Löwenfuss' garden; he swore that he loved, that he adored her, and when at last she lay trembling in his arms he tried to take her by storm, but that bold cavalry-exploit did not succeed, and the good-looking hussar found out, for the first time in his life, that a woman can at the same time be romantic, passionately in love, and yet virtuous.

The next morning, the tailor called on the Count, and begged him very humbly to state what his intentions with regard to Fanny were. The enamored hussar declared that he was determined to make the tailor's little daughter, Countess W——. Herr Löwenfuss was so much overcome by his feelings, that he showed great inclination to embrace his future son-in-law. The Count, however, laid down certain conditions. The whole matter must be kept a profound secret, for

he had every prospect of inheriting half a million of florins, on the death of an aunt, who was already eighty years old, which he should risk by a mesalliance.

When they heard this, the girl's parents certainly hesitated for a time, to give their consent to the marriage, but the handsome hussar, whose ardent passion carried Fanny away, at last gained the victory. The doctor received a pretty little note from the tailor's daughter, in which she told him that she gave him back his promise, as she had not found her ideal in him. Fanny then signed a deed, by which she formerly renounced all claims to her father's property, in favor of her sister, and left her home and her father's house with the Count under cover of the night, in order to accompany him to Poland, where the marriage was to take place in his castle.

Of course malicious tongues declared that the hussar had abducted Fanny, but her parents smiled at such reports, for they knew better, and the moment when their daughter would return as Countess W—— would amply recompense them for everything.

Meanwhile, the Polish Count and the romantic German girl were being carried by the train through the dreary plains of Masovia.[1] They stopped in a large town to make some purchases, and the Count, who was very wealthy and liberal, provided his future wife with everything that befits a Countess, and which a girl could fancy, and then they continued their journey. The country grew more picturesque, but more melancholy, as they went further East; the somber Carpathians rose from the snow-covered plains and villages, surrounded

[1] A division of Poland, of which Warsaw is the Capital.— TRANSLATOR.

by white glistening walls, and stunted willows stood by the side of the roads, ravens sailed through the white sky, and here and there a small peasant's sledge shot by, drawn by two thin horses.

At last they reached the station, where the Count's steward was waiting for them with a carriage and four, which brought them to their destination almost as swiftly as the iron steed.

The numerous servants were drawn up in the yard of the ancient castle to receive their master and mistress, and they gave loud cheers for her, for which she thanked them smilingly. When she went into the dim, arched passages, and the large rooms, for a moment she felt a strange feeling of fear, but she quickly checked it, for was not her most ardent wish to be fulfilled in a couple of hours?

She put on her bridal attire, in which a half comical, half sinister-looking old woman with a toothless mouth and a nose like an owl's, assisted her, and just as she was fixing the myrtle wreath onto her dark curls, the bell began to ring, which summoned her to her wedding. The Count himself, in full uniform, led her to the chapel of the castle, where the priest, with the steward and the castellan as witnesses, and the footmen in grand liveries, were awaiting the handsome young couple.

After the wedding, the marriage certificate was signed in the vestry, and a groom was sent to the station, where he dispatched a telegram to her parents, to the effect that the hussar had kept his word, and that Fanny Löwenfuss had become Countess Faniska W——.

Then the newly-married couple sat down to a beauti-

ful little dinner in company of the chaplain, the steward and the castellan; the champagne made them all very cheerful, and at last the Count knelt down before his young and beautiful wife, boldly took her white satin slipper off her foot, filled it with wine, and emptied it to her health.

At length night came, a thorough, Polish wedding night, and Faniska had just finished dressing and was looking at herself with proud satisfaction in the great mirror that was fastened into the wall, from top to bottom. A white satin train flowed down behind her like rays from the moon, a half-open jacket of bright green velvet, trimmed with valuable ermine, covered her voluptuous, virgin bust and her classic arms, only to show them all the more seductively at the slightest motion, while the wealth of her dark hair, in which diamonds hung here and there like glittering dew-drops, fell down her neck and mingled with the white fur. The Count came in a red velvet dressing gown trimmed with sable; at a sign from him, the old woman who was waiting on his wife's divinity left the room, and the next moment he was lying like a slave at the feet of his lovely young wife, who raised him up, and was pressing him to her heaving bosom, when a noise which she had never heard before, a wild howling, startled the loving woman in the midst of her highest bliss.

"What was that?" she asked, trembling.

The Count went to the window without speaking, and she followed him, with her arms round him, and looked half timidly, half curiously out into the darkness, where large bright spots were moving about in pairs, in the park at her feet.

"Are they will-o'-the-wisps?" she whispered.

"No, my child, they are wolves," the Count replied, fetching his double-barreled gun, which he loaded, and went out on the snow-covered balcony, while she drew the fur more closely over her bosom, and followed him.

"Will you shoot?" the Count asked her in a whisper, and when she nodded, he said: "Aim straight at the first pair of bright spots that you see; they are the eyes of those amiable brutes."

Then he handed her the gun and pointed it for her.

"That is the way — are you pointing straight?"

"Yes."

"Then fire."

A flash, a report, which the echo from the hills repeats four times, and two of the unpleasant-looking lights had vanished.

Then the Count fired, and by that time their people were all awake; they drove away the wolves with torches and shouts, and laid the two large animals, the spoils of a Polish wedding night, at the feet of their young mistress.

And the days that followed resembled that night. The Count showed himself the most attentive husband, as his wife's knight and slave, and she felt quite at home in that dull castle; she rode, drove, smoked, read French novels and beat her servants as well as any Polish Countess could have done. In the course of a few years, she presented the Count with two children, and although he appeared very happy at that, yet, like most husbands, he grew continually cooler, more indolent, and neglectful of her. From time to time he left the castle, to see after his affairs in the capital, and the intervals between those journeys became continually

shorter. Faniska felt that her husband was tired of her, and much as it grieved her, she did not let him notice it; she was always the same.

But at last the Count remained away altogether; at first he used to write, but at last the poor, weeping woman did not even receive letters to comfort her in her unhappy solitude, and his lawyer sent the money that she and her children required.

She conjectured, hoped and doubted, suffered and wept for more than a year; then she suddenly went to the capital and appeared unexpectedly in his apartments. Painful explanations followed, until at last the Count told her that he no longer loved her, and could not live with her for the future, and when she wished to make him do so by legal means, and entrusted her case to a celebrated lawyer, *the Count denied that she was his wife.* She produced her marriage certificate, when the most infamous fraud came to light. A confidential servant of the Count had acted the part of the priest, and the tailor's beautiful daughter had, as a matter of fact, merely been the Count's mistress, and her children were bastards.

The virtuous woman then saw, when it was too late, that it was *she* who had formed a mesalliance. Her parents would have nothing to do with her, and at last it turned out in the bargain that the Count was married long before he knew her, but that he did not live with his wife.

Then Fanny applied to the police magistrates; she wanted to appeal to justice, but she was dissuaded from taking criminal proceedings; for although they would certainly lead to the punishment of her daring seducer, they would also bring about her own total ruin.

At last, however, her lawyer effected a settlement between them, which was favorable to Fanny, and which she accepted for the sake of her children. The Count paid her a considerable sum down, and gave her the gloomy castle to live in. Thither she returned with a broken heart, and from that time she lived alone, a sullen misanthrope, a fierce despot.

From time to time, a stranger wandering through the Carpathians, meets a pale woman of demonic beauty, wearing a magnificent sable skin jacket and with a gun over her shoulder, in the forest, or in the winter in a sledge, driving her foaming horses until they nearly drop from fatigue, while the sleigh bells utter a melancholy sound, and at last die away in the distance, like the weeping of a solitary, deserted human heart.

BERTHA

MY old friend (one has friends occasionally who are much older than oneself), my old friend Doctor Bonnet, had often invited me to spend some time with him at Riom, and as I did not know Auvergne, I made up my mind to go in the summer of 1876.

I got there by the morning train, and the first person I saw on the platform was the doctor. He was dressed in a gray suit, and wore a soft, black, wide-brimmed, high-crowned felt hat, which was narrow at the top like a chimney pot, a hat which hardly any one except an Auvergnat would wear, and which smacked of the charcoal burner. Dressed like that, the doctor had the appearance of an old young man, with his spare body under his thin coat, and his large head covered with white hair.

He embraced me with that evident pleasure which country people feel when they meet long-expected friends, and stretching out his arm, he said proudly:

"This is Auvergne!" I saw nothing except a range of mountains before me, whose summits, which resembled truncated cones, must have been extinct volcanoes.

Then, pointing to the name of the station, he said:

"*Riom,* the fatherland of magistrates, the pride of the magistracy, and which ought rather to be the fatherland of doctors."

"Why?" I asked.

"Why?" he replied with a laugh. "If you transpose the letters, you have the Latin word *mori,* to die. . . . That is the reason why I settled here, my young friend."

And delighted at his own joke, he carried me off, rubbing his hands.

As soon as I had swallowed a cup of coffee, he made me go and see the town. I admired the chemist's house, and the other celebrated houses, which were all black, but as pretty as knick-nacks, with façades of sculptured stone. I admired the statue of the Virgin, the patroness of butchers, and he told me an amusing story about this, which I will relate some other time, and then Doctor Bonnet said to me:

"I must beg you to excuse me for a few minutes while I go and see a patient, and then I will take you to Chatel-Guyon, so as to show you the general aspect of the town, and all the mountain chain of the Puy-de-Dôme, before lunch. You can wait for me outside; I shall only go upstairs and come down immediately."

He left me outside one of those old, gloomy, silent, melancholy houses, which one sees in the provinces, and this one appeared to look particularly sinister, and I soon discovered the reason. All the large windows on the first floor were half boarded up with wooden shutters. The upper part of them alone could be opened, as if one had wished to prevent the people who were locked up in that huge stone trunk from looking into the street.

When the doctor came down again, I told him how it had struck me, and he replied:

"You are quite right; the poor creature who is living there must never see what is going on outside.

She is a mad woman, or rather an idiot, what you Normans would call a *Niente*.[1] It is a miserable story, but a very singular pathological case at the same time. Shall I tell you?"

I begged him to do so, and he continued:

"Twenty years ago, the owners of this house, who were my patients, had a daughter who was like all other girls, but I soon discovered that while her body became admirably developed, her intellect remained stationary.

"She began to walk very early, but she could not talk. At first I thought she was deaf, but I soon discovered that although she heard perfectly, she did not understand anything that was said to her. Violent noises made her start and frightened her, without her understanding how they were caused.

"She grew up into a superb woman, but she was dumb, from an absolute want of intellect. I tried all means to introduce a gleam of sense into her head, but nothing succeeded. I thought that I noticed that she knew her nurse, though as soon as she was weaned, she failed to recognize her mother. She could never pronounce that word, which is the first that children utter, and the last which soldiers murmur when they are dying on the field of battle. She sometimes tried to talk, but she produced nothing but incoherent sounds.

"When the weather was fine, she laughed continually, and emitted some low cries which might be compared to the twittering of birds; when it rained she cried and moaned in a mournful, terrifying manner, which sounded like the howling of a dog when a death occurs in a house.

"She was fond of rolling on the grass, like young

[1] A *Nothing*.—TRANSLATOR.

animals do, and of running about madly, and she used to clap her hands every morning, when the sun shone into her room, and would jump out of bed and insist by signs, on being dressed as quickly as possible, so that she might get out.

"She did not appear to distinguish between people, between her mother and her nurse, or between her father and me, or between the coachman and the cook. I liked her parents, who were very unhappy on her account, very much, and went to see them nearly every day. I dined with them tolerably frequently, which enabled me to remark that Bertha (they had called her Bertha), seemed to recognize the various dishes, and to prefer some to others. At that time she was twelve years old, but as fully formed in figure as a girl of eighteen, and taller than I was. Then, the idea struck me of developing her greediness, and by these means to try and produce some slight powers of distinguishing into her mind, and to force her, by the diversity of flavors, if not to reason, at any rate to arrive at instinctive distinctions, which would of themselves constitute a species of work that was material to thought. Later on, by appealing to her passions, and by carefully making use of those which could serve us, we might hope to obtain a kind of reaction on her intellect, and by degrees increase the insensible action of her brain.

"One day I put two plates before her, one of soup, and the other of very sweet vanilla cream. I made her taste each of them successively, and then I let her choose for herself, and she ate the plate of cream. In a short time I made her very greedy, so greedy that it appeared as if the only idea she had in her head was

She learned that all the strokes had not the same value.

the desire for eating. She perfectly recognized the various dishes, and stretched out her hands towards those that she liked, and took hold of them eagerly, and she used to cry when they were taken from her. Then I thought I would try and teach her to come to the dining room when the dinner bell rang. It took a long time, but I succeeded in the end. In her vacant intellect, there was a fixed correlation between the sound and her taste, a correspondence between two senses, an appeal from one to the other, and consequently a sort of connection of ideas — if one can call that kind of instinctive hyphen between two organic functions an idea — and so I carried my experiments further, and taught her, with much difficulty, to recognize meal times on the face of the clock.

"It was impossible for me for a long time to attract her attention to the hands, but I succeeded in making her remark the clockwork and the striking apparatus. The means I employed were very simple; I asked them not to have the bell rung for lunch, and everybody got up and went into the dining room, when the little brass hammer struck twelve o'clock, but I found great difficulty in making her learn to count the strokes. She ran to the door each time she heard the clock strike, but by degrees she learned that all the strokes had not the same value as far as regarded meals, and she frequently fixed her eyes, guided by her ears, on the dial of the clock.

"When I noticed that, I took care, every day at twelve and at six o'clock to place my fingers on the figures twelve and six, as soon as the moment she was waiting for, had arrived, and I soon noticed that she

attentively followed the motion of the small brass hands, which I had often turned in her presence.

"She had understood! Perhaps I ought rather to say that she had seized the idea. I had succeeded in getting the knowledge, or rather the sensation of the time into her, just as is the case with carp, who certainly have no clocks, when they are fed every day exactly at the same time.

"When once I had obtained that result, all the clocks and watches in the house occupied her attention almost exclusively. She spent her time in looking at them, in listening to them and in waiting for meal times, and once something very funny happened. The striking apparatus of a pretty little Louis XVI. clock that hung at the head of her bed, having got out of order, she noticed it. She sat for twenty minutes, with her eyes on the hands, waiting for it to strike ten, but when the hand passed the figure, she was astonished at not hearing anything; so stupefied was she, indeed, that she sat down, no doubt overwhelmed by a feeling of violent emotion, such as attacks us in the face of some terrible catastrophe. And she had the wonderful patience to wait until eleven o'clock, in order to see what would happen, and as she naturally heard nothing, she was suddenly either seized with a wild fit of rage at having been deceived, and imposed upon by appearances, or else overcome by that fear which some frightened creature feels at some terrible mystery, and by the furious impatience of a passionate individual who meets with some obstacle, she took up the tongs from the fireplace and struck the clock so violently that she broke it to pieces in a moment.

"It was evident, therefore, that her brain did act

and calculate, obscurely it is true, and within very restricted limits, for I could never succeed in making her distinguish persons as she distinguished the time; and to stir her intellect, it was necessary to appeal to her passions, in the material sense of the word, and we soon had another, and alas! a very terrible proof of this!"

. . . . . .

"She had grown up into a splendid girl; a perfect type of a race, a sort of lovely and stupid Venus. She was sixteen, and I have rarely seen such perfection of form, such suppleness and such regular features. I said she was a Venus; yes, a fair, stout, vigorous Venus, with large, bright, vacant eyes, which were as blue as the flowers of the flax plant; she had a large mouth with full lips, the mouth of a glutton, of a sensualist, a mouth made for kisses. Well, one morning her father came into my consulting room, with a strange look on his face, and, sitting down, without even replying to my greeting, he said:

"'I want to speak to you about a very serious matter. . . . Would it be possible . . . would it be possible for Bertha to marry?'

"'Bertha to marry! . . . Why, it is quite impossible!'

"'Yes, I know, I know,' he replied. . . . 'But reflect, Doctor . . . don't you think . . . perhaps . . . we hoped . . . if she had children . . . it would be a great shock to her, but a great happiness, and . . . who knows whether maternity might not rouse her intellect . . .?'

'I was in a state of great perplexity. He was right,

and it was possible that such a new situation, and that wonderful instinct of maternity which beats in the hearts of the lower animals, as it does in the heart of a woman, which makes the hen fly at a dog's jaws to defend her chickens, might bring about a revolution, an utter change in her vacant mind, and set the motionless mechanism of her thoughts into movement. And then, moreover, I immediately remembered a personal instance. Some years previously I had possessed a spaniel bitch who was so stupid that I could do nothing with her, but when she had had pups she became, if not exactly intelligent, yet almost like many other dogs who have not been thoroughly broken.

"As soon as I foresaw the possibility of this, the wish to get Bertha married grew in me, not so much out of friendship for her and her poor parents, as from scientific curiosity. What would happen? It was a singular problem, and I said to her father:

"'Perhaps you are right. . . . You might make the attempt . . . but . . . but you will never find a man to consent to marry her.'

"'I have found somebody,' he said in a low voice.

"I was dumbfounded, and said: 'Somebody really suitable? . . . Some one of your own rank and position in society?'

"'Decidedly,' he replied.

"'Oh! And may I ask his name?'

"'I came on purpose to tell you, and to consult you. It is Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles.'

"I felt inclined to exclaim: 'What a wretch,' but I held my tongue, and after a few moments' silence, I said:

"'Oh! Very good. I see nothing against it.'

"The poor man shook me heartily by the hand.

"'She is to be married next month,' he said."

. . . . . .

"Monsieur Gaston du Boys de Lucelles was a scapegrace of good family, who, after having spent all that he had inherited from his father, and having incurred debts by all kinds of doubtful means, had been trying to discover some other way of obtaining money, and he had discovered this method. He was a good-looking young fellow, and in capital health, but fast; one of those odious race of provincial fast men, and he appeared to me to be a sufficient sort of a husband, who could be got rid of later, by making him an allowance. He came to the house to pay his addresses, and to strut about before the idiot girl, who, however, seemed to please him. He brought her flowers, kissed her hands, sat at her feet and looked at her with affectionate eyes; but she took no notice of any of his attentions, and did not make any distinction between him and the other persons who were about her.

"However, the marriage took place, and you may guess how excited my curiosity was. I went to see Bertha the next day, to try and discover from her looks whether any feelings had been roused in her, but I found her just the same as she was every day, wholly taken up with the clock and dinner, while he, on the contrary, appeared really in love, and tried to rouse his wife's spirits and affections by little endearments, and such caresses as one bestows on a kitten. He could think of nothing better.

"I called upon the married couple pretty frequently,

and I soon perceived that the young woman knew her husband, and gave him those eager looks which she had hitherto bestowed only on sweet dishes.

"She followed his movements, knew his step on the stairs or in the neighboring rooms, clapped her hands when he came in, and her face was changed, and brightened by the flames of profound happiness, and of desire.

"She loved him with her whole body, and with all her soul, to the very depths of her poor, weak soul, and with all her heart, that poor heart of some grateful animal. It was really a delightful and innocent picture of simple passion, of carnal and yet modest passion, such as nature had implanted into mankind, before man had complicated and disfigured it, by all the various shades of sentiment. But he soon grew tired of this ardent, beautiful, dumb creature, and did not spend more than an hour a day with her, thinking it sufficient to devote his rights to her, and she began to suffer in consequence. She used to wait for him from morning till night, with her eyes on the clock; she did not even look after the meals now, for he took all his away from home, *Clermont, Chatel-Guyon, Royat,* no matter where, as long as he was not obliged to come home.

"She began to grow thin; every other thought, every other wish, every other expectation and every other confused hope, disappeared from her mind, and the hours during which she did not see him, became hours of terrible suffering to her. Soon he used frequently not to come home at night; he spent them with women at the casino at *Royat,* and did not come home until day-break. But she never went to bed before he returned. She remained sitting motionless in an easy

chair, with her eyes fixed on the clock, which turned so slowly and regularly round the china face, on which the hours were painted.

"She heard the trot of his horse in the distance, and sat up with a start, and when he came into the room, she got up with the movements of a phantom, and pointed to the clock, as if to say to him: 'Look how late it is!'

"And he began to be afraid of this amorous and jealous, half-witted woman, and flew into a rage, like brutes do; and one night, he even went so far as to strike her, so they sent for me. When I arrived she was writhing and screaming, in a terrible crisis of pain, anger, passion, how do I know what? Can one tell what goes on in such undeveloped brains?

"I calmed her by subcutaneous injections of morphine, and forbade her to see that man again, for I saw clearly that marriage would infallibly kill her, by degrees."

. . . . . .

"Then she went mad! Yes, my dear friend, that idiot has gone mad. She is always thinking of him and waiting for him; she waits for him all day and night, awake or asleep, at this very moment, ceaselessly. When I saw her getting thinner and thinner, and as she persisted in never taking her eyes off the clocks, I had them removed from the house. I thus made it impossible for her to count the hours, and to try to remember, from her indistinct reminiscences, at what time he used to come home, formerly. I hope to destroy the recollection of it in time, and to extinguish that ray of thought which I kindled with so much difficulty.

The other day, I tried an experiment. I offered her my watch; she took it and looked at it for some time; then she began to scream terribly, as if the sight of that little object had suddenly aroused her recollection, which was beginning to grow indistinct. She is pitiably thin now, with hollow cheeks and brilliant eyes, and she walks up and down ceaselessly, like a wild beast does in its cage; I have had bars put to the windows, and have had the seats fixed to the floor, so as to prevent her from looking to see whether he is coming.

"Oh! her poor parents! What a life they must lead!"

We had got to the top of the hill, and the doctor turned round and said to me:

"Look at Riom from here."

The gloomy town looked like some ancient city. Behind it, a green, wooded plain studded with towns and villages, and bathed in a soft blue haze, extended, until it was lost in the distance. Far away, on my right, there was a range of lofty mountains with round summits, or else cut off flat, as if with a sword, and the doctor began to enumerate the villages, towns and hills, and to give me the history of all of them. But I did not listen to him; I was thinking of nothing but the mad woman, and I only saw her. She seemed to be hovering over that vast extent of country like a mournful ghost, and I asked him abruptly:

"What has become of the husband?"

My friend seemed rather surprised, but after a few moments' hesitation, he replied:

"He is living at Royat, on an allowance that they make, and is quite happy; he leads a very fast life."

As we were slowly going back, both of us silent and

rather low-spirited, an English dog cart, drawn by a thoroughbred horse, came up behind us, and passed us rapidly. The doctor took me by the arm.

" There he is," he said.

I saw nothing except a gray felt hat, cocked over one ear, above a pair of broad shoulders, driving off in a cloud of dust.

ABANDONED

"I REALLY think you must be mad, my dear, to go for a country walk in such weather as this. You have had some very strange ideas for the last two months. You take me to the sea side in spite of myself, when you have never once had such a whim during all the forty-four years that we have been married. You chose Fécamp, which is a very dull town, without consulting me in the matter, and now you are seized with such a rage for walking, you who hardly ever stir out on foot, that you want to go into the country on the hottest day in the year. Ask d'Apreval to go with you, as he is ready to gratify all your fancies. As for me, I am going back to have a nap."

Madame de Cadour turned to her old friend and said:

"Will you come with me, Monsieur d'Apreval?"

He bowed with a smile, and with all the gallantry of bygone years:

"I will go wherever you go," he replied.

"Very well, then, go and get a sunstroke," Monsieur de Cadour said; and he went back to the *Hôtel des Bains,* to lie down on his bed for an hour or two.

As soon as they were alone, the old lady and her old companion set off, and she said to him in a low voice, squeezing his hand:

"At last! at last!"

"You are mad," he said in a whisper. "I assure

you that you are mad. Think of the risk you are running. If that man . . ."

She started.

"Oh! Henri, do not say *that man,* when you are speaking of him."

"Very well," he said abruptly, "if our son guesses anything, if he has any suspicions, he will have you, he will have us both in his power. You have got on without seeing him for the last forty years; what is the matter with you to-day?"

They had been going up the long street that leads from the sea to the town, and now they turned to the right, to go to Etretat. The white road extended in front of them, under a blaze of brilliant sunshine, so they went on slowly in the burning heat. She had taken her old friend's arm, and was looking straight in front of her, with a fixed and haunted gaze, and at last she said:

"And so you have not seen him again, either?"

"No, never."

"Is it possible?"

"My dear friend, do not let us begin that discussion again. I have a wife and children and you have a husband, so we both of us have much to fear from other people's opinion."

She did not reply; she was thinking of her long-past youth, and of many sad things that had occurred. She had been married as girls are married; she hardly knew her betrothed, who was a diplomatist, and later, she lived the same life with him that all women of the world live with their husbands. But Monsieur d'Apreval, who was also married, loved her with a profound passion, and while Monsieur de Cadour was absent in

India, on a political mission for a long time, she succumbed. Could she possibly have resisted, have refused to give herself? Could she have had the strength and courage not to have yielded, as she loved him also? No, certainly not; it would have been too hard; she would have suffered too much! How cruel and deceitful life is! Is it possible to avoid certain attacks of fate, or can one escape from one's destiny? When a solitary, abandoned woman, without children and with a careless husband, always escapes from the passion which a man feels for her, as she would escape from the sun, in order to live in darkness until she dies?

How well she recalled all the details, his kisses, his smiles, the way he used to stop, in order to watch her until she was indoors. What happy days they were; the only really delicious days she had ever enjoyed; and how quickly they were over!

And then she discovered that she was pregnant! What anguish!

Oh! that journey to the South, that long journey, her sufferings, her constant terror, that secluded life in the small, solitary house on the shores of the Mediterranean, at the bottom of a garden, which she did not venture to leave. How well she remembered those long days which she spent lying under an orange tree, looking up at the round, red fruit, amidst the green leaves. How she used to long to go out, as far as the sea, whose fresh breezes came to her over the wall, and whose small waves she could hear lapping on the beach. She dreamt of its immense blue expanse sparkling under the sun, with the white sails of the small vessels, and a mountain on the horizon. But she did not dare to go outside the gate; suppose anybody had recognized

her, unshapely as she was, and showing her disgrace by her expanded waist!

And those days of waiting, those last days of misery and expectation! The impending suffering and then, that terrible night! What misery she had endured, and what a night it was! How she had groaned and screamed! She could still see the pale face of her lover, who kissed her hand every moment, and the clean-shaven face of the doctor, and the nurse's white cap.

And what she felt when she heard the child's feeble cries, that mewling, that first effort of a human voice!

And the next day! the next day! the only day of her life on which she had seen and kissed her son, for from that time, she had never even caught a glimpse of him.

And what a long, void existence hers had been since then, with the thought of that child always, always floating before her. She had never seen her son, that little creature that had been part of herself, even once since then; they had taken him from her, carried him away and hidden him. All she knew was, that he had been brought up by some peasants in Normandy, that he had become a peasant himself, had married well, and that his father, whose name he did not know, had settled a handsome sum of money on him.

How often during the last forty years had she wished to go and see him, and to embrace him. She could not imagine to herself that he had grown! She always thought of that small, human *larva,* which she had held in her arms and pressed to her side for a day.

How often she had said to her lover: "I cannot bear it any longer; I must go and see him."

But he had always stopped her, and kept her from going. She would not be able to restrain and to master herself; their son would guess it and take advantage of her, blackmail her; she would be lost.

. . . . . .

"What is he like?" she said.

"I do not know; I have not seen him again, either."

"Is it possible? To have a son, and not to know him; to be afraid of him and to repulse him as if he were a disgrace! It is horrible."

They went along the dusty road, overcome by the scorching sun, and continually ascending that interminable hill.

"One might take it for a punishment," she continued; "I have never had another child, and I could no longer resist the longing to see him, which has possessed me for forty years. You men cannot understand that. You must remember that I shall not live much longer, and suppose I had never seen him again! never have seen him! . . . Is it possible? How could I wait so long? I have thought about him every day since, and what a terrible existence mine has been! I have never awakened, never, do you understand, without my first thoughts being of him, of my child. How is he? Oh! How guilty I feel towards him! Ought one to fear what the world may say, in a case like this? I ought to have left everything to go after him, to bring him up and to show love for him. I should certainly have been much happier, but I did not dare, I was a coward. How I have suffered! Oh! How those poor, abandoned children must hate their mothers!"

She stopped suddenly, for she was choked by her sobs. The whole valley was deserted and silent in the

dazzling light, and the overwhelming heat, and only the grasshoppers uttered their shrill, continuous chirp among the sparse, yellow grass on both sides of the road.

"Sit down a little," he said.

She allowed herself to be led to the side of the ditch, and sank down with her face in her hands. Her white hair, which hung in curls on both sides of her face, had become all of a lump, and she wept, overcome by profound grief, while he stood facing her, uneasy and not knowing what to say, and he merely murmured: "Come, have courage."

She got up.

"I will," she said, and wiping her eyes, she began to walk again with the jerky steps of an old woman.

Rather farther on, the road passed under a clump of trees, which hid a few houses, and they could distinguish the vibrating and regular blows of a blacksmith's hammer on the anvil; and soon they saw a cart drawn upon the right in front of a low cottage, and two men shoeing a horse under a shed.

Monsieur d'Apreval went up to them.

"Where is Pierre Benedict's farm?" he asked.

"Take the road on the left, close to the public house, and then go straight on; it is the third house past Poret's. There is a small spruce-fir close to the gate; you cannot make a mistake."

They turned to the left; she was walking very slowly now; her legs threatened to give way, and her heart was beating so violently that she felt as if she should be suffocated, while at every step she murmured, as if in prayer:

"Oh! good heavens! good heavens!"

Monsieur d'Apreval, who was also nervous and rather pale, said to her somewhat gruffly:

"If you cannot manage to command your feelings better, you will betray yourself immediately. Do try and restrain yourself."

"How can I?" she replied. "My child! When I think that I am going to see my child!"

They were going along one of those narrow country lanes between farmyards, that are buried beneath a double row of beech trees, by the sides of the ditches, and suddenly they found themselves in front of a gate, over which there hung a young spruce-fir.

"This is it," he said.

She stopped suddenly and looked about her. The courtyard, which was planted with apple-trees, was large and extended as far as the small, thatched dwelling-house. Opposite to it, were the stable, the barn, the cow-house and the poultry-house, while the gig, wagon and the manure cart were under a slated outhouse. Four calves were grazing under the shade of the trees, and black hens were wandering all about the enclosure.

All was perfectly still; the house door was open, but nobody was to be seen, and so they went in, when immediately a large, black dog came out of a barrel that was standing under a pear tree, and began to bark furiously.

There were four bee-hives on boards against the wall of the house.

Monsieur d'Apreval stood outside and called out:

"Is anybody at home?"

Then a girl appeared, a little girl of about ten, dressed in a chemise and a linen petticoat, with dirty,

bare legs, and a timid and cunning look. She remained standing in the doorway, as if to prevent any one going in.

"What do you want?" she asked.

"Is your father in?"

"No."

"Where is he?"

"I don't know."

"And your mother?"

"Gone after the cows."

"Will she be back soon?"

"I don't know."

But suddenly, the old woman, as if she feared that he might force her to return, said quickly:

"I will not go without having seen him."

"We will wait for him, my dear friend."

As they turned away, they saw a peasant woman coming towards the house, carrying two tin pails, which appeared to be heavy, and which glistened brightly in the sunlight.

She limped with her right leg, and in her brown, knitted jacket, that was faded by the sun, and washed out by the rain, she looked like a poor, wretched, dirty servant.

"Here is Mamma," the child said.

When she got close to the house, she looked at the strangers angrily and suspiciously, and then she went in, as if she had not seen them. She looked old, and had a hard, yellow, wrinkled face, one of those wooden faces like country people so often have.

Monsieur d'Apreval called her back.

"I beg your pardon, Madame, but we came in to know whether you could sell us two glasses of milk."

She was grumbling when she reappeared in the door, after putting down her pails.

"I don't sell milk," she replied.

"We are very thirsty," he said, "and Madame is old and very tired. Can we not get something to drink?"

The peasant woman gave them an uneasy and cunning glance, and then she made up her mind.

"As you are here, I will give you some," she said, going into the house, and almost immediately the child came out and brought two chairs, which she placed under an apple tree, and then the mother in turn brought out two bowls of foaming milk, which she gave to the visitors. She did not return to the house, however, but remained standing near them, as if to watch them and to find out for what purpose they had come there.

"You have come from Fécamp?" she said.

"Yes," Monsieur d'Apreval replied, "we are staying at Fécamp for the summer."

And then after a short silence he continued:

"Have you any fowls you could sell us, every week?"

The woman hesitated for a moment, and then replied:

"Yes, I think I have. I suppose you want young ones?"

"Yes, of course."

"What do you pay for them in the market?"

D'Apreval, who had not the least idea, turned to his companion:

"What are you paying for poultry in Fécamp, my dear lady?"

"Four francs, and four francs, fifty centimes," she

said with her eyes full of tears, and the farmer's wife, who was looking at her askance, in much surprise, asked:

"Is the lady ill, as she is crying?"

He did not know what to say, and replied with some hesitation:

"No . . . no . . . but she lost her watch as we came, a very handsome watch, and that troubles her. If anybody should find it, please let us know."

Mother Benedict did not reply, as she thought it a very equivocal soft of answer, but suddenly she exclaimed:

"Oh! here is my husband!"

She was the only one who had seen him, as she was facing the gate. D'Apreval started, and Madame de Cadour nearly fell, as she turned round suddenly on her chair.

A man who was bent nearly double and who was panting for breath, was there, ten yards from them, dragging a cow at the end of a rope; and without taking any notice of the visitors, he said:

"Confound it! What a brute!"

And he went past them, and disappeared in the cow-house.

Her tears had dried quickly, as she sat there startled, without a word, and with the one thought in her mind, that this was her son, and d'Apreval, whom the same thought had struck very unpleasantly, said in an agitated voice:

"Is this Monsieur Benedict?"

"Who told you his name?" the wife asked, still rather suspiciously.

"The blacksmith at the corner of the highroad," he replied, and then they were all silent, with their eyes fixed on the door of the cow-house, which formed a sort of black hole in the wall of the building. Nothing could be seen inside, but they heard a vague noise, movements, and footsteps and the sound of hoofs, which were deadened by the straw on the floor, and soon he reappeared in the door, wiping his forehead, and went towards the house with long, slow strides. He passed the strangers without seeming to notice them, and said to his wife:

"Go and draw me a jug of cider; I am very thirsty."

Then he went back into the house, while his wife went into the cellar, and left the two Parisians alone.

"Let us go, let us go Henri," Madame de Cadour said, nearly distracted with grief, and so d'Apreval took her by the arm, helped her to rise, and sustaining her with all his strength, for he felt that she was nearly falling down, he led her out, after throwing five francs onto one of the chairs.

As soon as they were outside the gate, she began to sob, and said, shaking with grief:

"Oh! oh! is that what you have made of him?"

He was very pale, and replied coldly:

"I did what I could. His farm is worth eighty thousand francs, and that is more than most of the children of the middle classes have."

They returned slowly, without speaking a word. She was still crying; the tears ran down her cheeks continually for a time, but by degrees they stopped, and they went back to Fécamp, where they found Monsieur de Cadour waiting dinner for them, and as soon as he saw them, he began to laugh, and exclaimed:

"So my wife has had a sunstroke, and I am very glad of it. I really think she has lost her head for some time past!"

Neither of them replied, and when the husband asked them rubbing his hands:

"Well, I hope that at least you have had a pleasant walk?"

Monsieur d' Apreval replied:

"A delightful walk, I assure you; perfectly delightful."

A NIGHT IN WHITECHAPEL

MY friend Ledantec and I were twenty-five and we had come to London for the first time in our lives. It was a Saturday evening in December, cold and foggy, and I think that all that combined is more than enough to explain why my friend Ledantec and I were most abominably drunk, though, to tell the truth, we did not feel any discomfort from it. On the contrary, we were floating in an atmosphere of perfect bliss. We did not speak, certainly, for we were incapable of doing so, but then we had no inclination for conversation. What would be the good of it? We could so easily read all our thoughts in each others eyes! And all our thoughts consisted in the sweet and unique knowledge, that we were thinking about nothing whatever.

It was not, however, in order to arrive at that state of delicious, intellectual nihility, that we had gone to mysterious Whitechapel. We had gone into the first public-house we saw, with the firm intention of studying manners and customs,— not to mention morals,— there as spectators, artists and philosophers, but in the second public-house we entered, we ourselves became like the objects of our investigations, that is to say, sponges soaked in alcohol. Between one public-house and the other, the outer air seemed to squeeze those sponges, which then got just as dry as before, and thus we rolled from public-house to public-house, until at last the sponges could not hold any more.

Consequently, we had for some time bidden farewell to our studies in morals, and now they were limited to two impressions: *zig-zags* through the darkness outside, and a gleam of light outside the public-houses. As to the inhibition of brandies, whiskies and gins, that was done mechanically, and our stomachs scarcely noticed it.

But what strange beings we had elbowed with during our long stoppages! What a number of faces to be remembered, what clothes, what attitudes, what talk and what rags!

At first we tried to note them exactly in our memory, but there were so many of them, and our brain got mixed so quickly, that at present we had no very clear recollection of anything or anybody. Even objects that were immediately before us appeared to us in a vague, dusky phantasmagoria and got confounded with precious objects in an inextricable manner. The world became a sort of kaleidoscope to us, seen in a dream through the penumbra of an aquarium.

Suddenly we were aroused from this state of somnolence, awakened as if by a blow in the chest, and imperiously forced to fix our attention on what we saw, for amidst this whirl of strange sights, one stranger than all attracted our eyes and seemed to say to us: "Look at me."

It was at the open door of a public-house. A ray of light streamed into the street through the half-open door, and that brutal ray fell right onto the specter that had just risen up there, dumb and motionless.

For it was indeed a specter, pitiful and terrible, and, above all, most real, as it stood out boldly against the

dark background of the street, which it made darker still behind it!

Young, yes; the woman was certainly young; there could be no doubt about that, when one looked at her smooth skin, her smiling mouth which showed her white teeth, and firm bust which could be plainly noted under her thin dress.

But then, how explain her perfectly white hair, not gray or growing gray, but absolutely white, as white as any octogenarian's?

And then her eyes, her eyes beneath her smooth brow, were surely the eyes of an old woman? Certainly they were, and of a woman one could not tell how old, for it must have taken years of trouble and sorrow, of tears and of sleepless nights, and a whole long existence, thus to dull, to wear out and to roughen those vitreous pupils.

Vitreous? Not exactly that. For roughened glass still retains a dull and milky brightness, a recollection, as it were, of its former transparency. But her eyes seemed rather to have been made of metal, which had turned rusty, and really if pewter could rust I should have compared them to pewter covered with rust. They had the dead color of pewter, and at the same time, they emitted a glance which was the color of reddish water.

But it was not until some time later that I tried to define them thus approximately by retrospective analysis. At that moment, being altogether incapable of such an effort, I could only establish in my own mind the idea of extreme decrepitude and horrible old age, which they produced in my imagination.

Have I said that they were set in very puffy eyelids,

which had no lashes whatever, and on her forehead without wrinkles there was not a vestige of eyebrow? When I tell you this, and considering their dull look beneath the hair of an octogenarian, it is not surprising that Ledantec and I said in a low voice at the sight of this woman, who was evidently young:

"Oh! poor, poor old woman!"

Her great age was further accentuated by the terrible poverty that was revealed by her dress. If she had been better dressed, her youthful looks would, perhaps, have struck us more, but her thin shawl, which was all that she had over her chemise, her single petticoat which was full of holes, and almost in rags, and which did not nearly reach to her bare feet, her straw hat with ragged feathers and with ribbons of no particular color through age, it all seemed so ancient, so prodigiously antique!

From what remote superannuated, abolished period did they all spring? One did not venture to guess, and by a perfectly natural association of ideas, one seemed to infer that the unfortunate creature herself, was as old as her clothes were. Now, by *one,* I mean by Ledantec and myself, that is to say, by two men who were abominably drunk and who were arguing with the special logic of intoxication.

It was also under the softening influence of alcohol that we looked at the vague smile on those lips with the teeth of a child, without stopping to reflect on the beauty of those youthful teeth, and seeing nothing except her fixed and almost idiotic smile, which no longer contrasted with the dull expression of her looks, but, on the contrary, strengthened them. For in spite of her teeth, it was the smile of an old woman in our imagina-

tion, and as for me, I was really pleased at the thought of being so acute when I inferred that this grandmother with such pale lips, had the set of teeth of a young girl, and still, thanks to the softening influence of alcohol, I was not angry with her for this artifice. I even thought it particularly praiseworthy, since, after all, the poor creature thus carried out her calling conscientiously, which was to seduce us. For there was no possible doubt about the matter, that this grandmother was nothing more nor less than a prostitute.

And then, drunk! Horribly drunk, much more drunk than Ledantec and I were, for we really could manage to say: "Oh! Pity the poor, poor old woman!" While she was incapable of articulating a single syllable, of making a gesture, or even of imparting a gleam of promise, a furtive flash of allurement to her eyes. With her hands crossed on her stomach, and resting against the front of the public-house, with her whole body as stiff as if she had been in a state of catalepsy, she had nothing alluring about her, except her sad smile, and that inspired us with all the more pity because she was even more drunk than we were, and so, by identical, spontaneous movement, we each of us seized her by an arm, to take her into the public-house with us.

To our great astonishment she resisted, sprang back, and so was in the shadow again, out of the ray of light which came through the door, while, at the same time, she began to walk through the darkness and to drag us with her, for she was clinging to our arms. We followed her without speaking and without knowing where we were going, but without the least uneasiness on that score. Only, when she suddenly burst into

violent sobs as she walked, Ledantec and I began to sob in unison.

The cold and the fog had suddenly congested our brains again, and we had again lost all precise consciousness of our acts, of our thoughts and of our sensations. Our sobs had nothing of grief in them, but we were floating in an atmosphere of perfect bliss, and I can remember that at that moment it was no longer the exterior world which seemed to me as if I were looking at it through the penumbra of an aquarium; it was I myself, an *I* composed of three, which was changing into something that was floating adrift in something, though what it was I did not know, composed of palpable fog and intangible water, and it was exquisitely delightful.

From that moment I remember nothing more until what follows, and which had the effect of a clap of thunder on me, and made me rise up from the bottom of the depth to which I had descended.

Ledantec was standing in front of me, his face convulsed with horror, his hair standing on end and his eyes staring out of his head, and he shouted to me: —

"Let us escape! Let us escape!" Whereupon I opened my eyes wide, and found myself lying on the ground, in a room into which daylight was shining. I saw some rags hanging against the wall, two chairs, a broken jug lying on the floor by my side, and in a corner a wretched bed on which a woman was lying, who was no doubt dead, for her head was hanging over the side, and her long white hair reached almost to my feet.

With a bound I was up, like Ledantec.

"What!" I said to him, while my teeth chattered: "Did you kill her?"

"No, no," he replied. "But that makes no difference; let us be off."

I felt completely sober by that time, but I did think that he was still suffering somewhat from the effects of last night's drunk; otherwise, why should he wish to escape? while the remains of pity for the unfortunate woman forced me to say: —

"What is the matter with her? If she is ill, we must look after her."

And I went to the wretched bed, in order to put her head back on the pillow, but I discovered that she was neither dead nor ill, but only sound asleep, and I also noticed that she was quite young. She still wore that idiotic smile, but her teeth were her own and those of a girl. Her smooth skin and her firm bust showed that she was not more than sixteen; perhaps not so much.

"There! You see it, you can see it!" Ledantec said. "Let us be off."

He tried to drag me out, and he was still drunk; I could see it by his feverish movements, his trembling hands and his nervous looks. Then he implored me and said: —

"I slept beside the old woman; but she is not old. Look at her; look at her; yes, she is old after all!"

And he lifted up her long hair by handfuls; it was like handfuls of white silk, and then he added, evidently in a sort of delirium, which made me fear an attack of *delirium tremens*: "To think that I have begotten children, three, four children. Who knows how many children, all in one night! And they were born immediately, and have grown up already! Let us be off."

Decidedly it was an attack of madness. Poor Ledan-

tec! What could I do for him? I took his arm and tried to calm him, but he thought that I was going to try and make him go to bed with her again, and he pushed me away and exclaimed with tears in his voice: "If you do not believe me, look under the bed; the children are there; they are there, I tell you. Look here, just look here."

He threw himself down, flat on his stomach, and actually pulled out one, two, three, four children, who had hidden under the bed. I do not exactly know whether they were boys or girls, but all, like the sleeping woman, had white hair, the hair of an octogenarian.

Was I still drunk, like Ledantec, or was I mad? What was the meaning of this strange hallucination? I hesitated for a moment, and shook myself to be sure that it was I.

No, no, I had all my wits about me, and I in reality saw that horrible lot of little brats; they all had their faces in their hands, and were crying and squalling, and then suddenly one of them jumped onto the bed; all the others followed his example, and the woman woke up.

And then we stood, while those five pairs of eyes, without eyebrows or eyelashes, eyes with the dull color of pewter, and whose pupils had the color of red water, were steadily fixed on us.

"Let us be off! let us be off!" Ledantec repeated, leaving go of me, and at that time I paid attention to what he said, and, after throwing some small change onto the floor, I followed him, to make him understand, when he should be quite sober, that he saw before him a poor Albino prostitute, who had several brothers and sisters.

COUNTESS SATAN

I

THEY were discussing dynamite, the social revolution, Nihilism, and even those who cared least about politics, had something to say. Some were alarmed, others philosophized, while others again, tried to smile.

"Bah!" N—— said, "when we are all blown up, we shall see what it is like. Perhaps, after all, it may be an amusing sensation, provided one goes high enough."

"But we shall not be blown up at all," G—— the optimist, said, interrupting him. "It is all a romance."

"You are mistaken, my dear fellow," Jules de C—— replied. "It is like a romance, but with that confounded Nihilism, everything seems like one, but it would be a mistake to trust to it. Thus, I myself, the manner in which I made Bakounine's acquaintance . . ."

They knew that he was a good narrator, and it was no secret that his life had been an adventurous one, so they drew closer to him, and listened religiously. This is what he told them.

II

"I MET Countess Nioska W——, that strange woman who was usually called Countess Satan, in

Naples; I immediately attached myself to her out of curiosity, and I soon fell in love with her. Not that she was beautiful, for she was a Russian who had all the bad characteristics of the Russian type. She was thin and squat, at the same time, while her face was sallow and puffy, with high cheek bones and a Cossack's nose. But her conversation bewitched every one.

"She was many-sided, learned, a philosopher, scientifically depraved, satanic. Perhaps the word is rather pretentious, but it exactly expresses what I want to say, for in other words, she loved evil for the sake of evil. She rejoiced in other people's vices, and liked to sow the seeds of evil, in order to see it flourish. And that on a fraud, on an enormous scale. It was not enough for her to corrupt individuals; she only did that to keep her hand in; what she wished to do, was to corrupt the masses. By slightly altering it after her own fashion, she might have adopted the famous saying of Caligula. She also wished that the whole human race had but one head; but not in order that she might cut it off, but that she might make the philosophy of *Nihility* flourish there.

"What a temptation to become the lord and master of such a monster! And I allowed myself to be tempted, and undertook the adventure. The means came unsought for by me, and the only thing that I had to do, was to show myself more perverted and satanical that she was herself.— And so I played the devil.

"'Yes,' I said, 'we writers are the best workmen for doing evil, as our books may be bottles of poison. The so-called men of action, only turn the handle of the mitrailleuse which we have loaded. Formulas will destroy the world, and it is we who invent them.'

" ' That is true,' she said, ' and that is what is wanting in Bakounine, I am sorry to say.'

" That name was constantly in her mouth, and so I asked her for details, which she gave me, as she knew the man intimately.

" ' After all,' she said, with a contemptuous grimace, ' he is only a kind of Garibaldi.'

" She told me, although she made fun of him as she did so, about his Odyssey of the barricades and of the hulks which made up Bakounine's legend, and which is, nevertheless, only the exact truth; his part of chief of the insurgents, at Prague and then at Dresden; his first death sentence; about his imprisonment at Olmütz and in the casemates of the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul; in a subterranean dungeon at Schüsselburg; about his exile to Siberia and his wonderful escape down the river Amour, on a Japanese coasting-vessel by way of Yokohama and San Francisco, and about his final arrival in London, whence he was directing all the operations of Nihilism.

" ' You see,' she said, ' he is a thorough adventurer, and now all his adventures are over. He got married at Tobolsk and became a mere respectable, middle-class man. And then, he has no individual ideas. Herzen, the phamphleteer of *Kolokol* inspired him with the only fertile phrase that he ever uttered: *Land and Liberty!* But that is not yet the definite formula, the general formula; what I will call, the dynamite formula. At best, Bakounine would become an incendiary, and burn down cities. And what is that, I ask you? Bah? A second-hand Rostopchin! He wants a prompter, and I offered to become his but he did not take me seriously.' . . .

" It would be useless to enter into all the Psychological details which marked the course of my passion for the Countess, and to explain to you more fully the attraction of curiosity which she offered me more and more every day. It was getting exasperating, and the more so, as she resisted me as stoutly as the shyest of innocents could have done, but at the end of a month of mad Satanism, I saw what her game was. Do you know what she had thought of ? She meant to make me Bakounine's prompter, or, at any rate, that is what she said. But no doubt she reserved the right to herself, and that is how I understood her, to prompt the prompter, and my passion for her, which she purposely left unsatisfied, assured her that absolute power over me.

" All this may appear madness to you, but it is, nevertheless, the exact truth, and, in short, one morning she bluntly made the offer: ' Become Bakounine's soul, and you shall have me.'

" Of course, I accepted, for it was too fantastically strange to refuse; do you think so? What an adventure! What luck! A number of letters between the Countess and Bakounine prepared the way; I was introduced to him at his house, and they discussed me there. I became a sort of Western prophet, a mystic charmer who was ready to nihilate the Latin races, the Saint Paul of the new religion of nothingness, and at last a day was fixed for us to meet in London. He lived in a small, one-storied house in Pimlico, with a tiny garden in front, and nothing noticeable about it.

" We were first of all shown into the commonplace parlor of all English homes, and then upstairs. The room where the Countess and I were left, was small, and

very badly furnished, with a square table with writing materials on it, in the middle. That was his sanctuary; the deity soon appeared, and I saw him in flesh and bone; especially in flesh, for he was enormously stout. His broad face, with prominent cheek-bones, in spite of the fat; and with a nose like a double funnel, with small, sharp eyes, which had a magnetic look, proclaimed the Tartar, the old Turanian blood, which produced the Attilas, the Gengis-Khams, the Tamerlanes. The obesity, which is characteristic of the nomad races, who are always on horseback or driving, added to his Asiatic look. The man was certainly not a European, a slave, a descendant of the deistic Aryans, but a descendant of the Atheistic hordes, who had several times already almost overrun Europe, and who, instead of any ideas of progress, have the belief in nihility, at the bottom of their hearts.

"I was astonished, for I had not expected that the majesty of a whole race, could be thus revived in a man, and my stupefaction increased after an hour's conversation. I could quite understand why such a Colossus had not wished for the Countess as his Egeria; she was a mere silly child to have dreamt of acting such a part to such a thinker. She had not felt the profoundness of that horrible philosophy which was hidden under that material activity, nor had she seen the prophet under that man of the barricades. Or, perhaps, he had not thought it advisable to reveal himself to her like that; but he revealed himself to me, and inspired me with terror.

"A prophet? Oh! yes. He thought himself an Attila, and foresaw the consequences of his revolution; it was not only from instinct, but also from theory that

he urged a nation on to nihilism. The phrase is not his, but Tourgueneff's, I believe, but the idea certainly belongs to him. He got his program of agricultural communism from Herzen, and his destructive radicalism from Pougatcheff, but he did not stop there. I mean that he went on to evil for the sake of evil. Herzen wished for the happiness of the Slav peasant; Pougatcheff wanted to be elected Emperor, but all that Bakounine wanted, was to overthrow the actual order of things, no matter by what means, and to replace social concentration by a universal upheaval.

"It was the dream of a Tartar; it was true nihilism pushed to extreme practical conclusions. It was, in a word, the applied philosophy of chance, the indeterminateism of anarchy. Monstrous it may be, but grand in its monstrosity.

"And you must note, that the man of action who was so despised by the Countess, discovered in Bakounine the gigantic dreamer whom I have just shown you, and his dream did not remain a dream, but began to be realized. It was by the care of that organizer that the Nihilistic party assumed a body; a party in which there is a little of everything, you know; but on the whole, a formidable party, on account of the advanced guard in true Nihilism, whose object is nothing less than to destroy the Western world, to see it blossom from under the ruins of a general dispersion, which is the last conception of modern Tartarism.

"I never saw Bakounine again, for the Countess's conquest would have been too dearly bought by any attempt to act a comedy with this *Old-Man-of-the-Mountains*. And besides that, after this visit, poor Countess Satan appeared to me quite silly. Her fa-

mous Satanism was nothing but the flicker of a spirit-lamp, after the general conflagration of which the other had dreamt, and she had certainly shown herself very silly, when she could not understand that prodigious monster. And as she had seduced me, only by her intellect and her perversity, I was disgusted as soon as she laid aside that mask. I left her without telling her of my intention, and never saw her again, either.

"No doubt they both took me for a spy from the *Third section of the Imperial Chancellery*. In that case, they must have thought me very strong to have resisted, and all I have to do is to look out, if any affiliated members of their society recognize me! . . ."

III

THEN he smiled, and turning to the waiter who had just come in, he said: "Meanwhile, open us another bottle of champagne, and make the cork pop! It will, at any rate, somewhat accustom us to the day when we shall all be blown up with dynamite ourselves."

KIND GIRLS

EVERY Friday, regularly, at about eleven o'clock in the morning, he came into the court-yard, put down his soft hat at his feet, struck a few chords on his guitar and then began a ballad in his full, rich voice. And soon at every window in the four sides of that dull, barrack-like building, some girls appeared, one in an elegant dressing gown, another in a little jacket, most of them with their breasts and arms bare, all of them just out of bed, with their hair hastily twisted up, their eyes blinking in the sudden blaze of sunlight, their complexions dull and their eyes still heavy from want of sleep.

They swayed themselves backwards and forwards to his slow melody, and gave themselves up to the enjoyment of it, and coppers, and even silver, poured into the handsome singer's hat, and more than one of them would have liked to have followed the penny which she threw to him, and to have gone with the singer who had the voice of a siren, and who seemed to say to all these amorous girls; "Come, come to my retreat, where you will find a palace of crystal and gold, and wreaths which are always fresh, and happiness and love which never die."

That was what they seemed to hear, those unhappy girls, when they heard him sing the songs of the old legends, which they had formerly believed. That was what they understood by the foolish words of the ballad. Then and nothing else, for how could any

one doubt it, on seeing the fresh roses on their cheeks, and the tender flame which flickered like a mystic night-light in their eyes, which had, for the moment, become the eyes of innocent young girls again? But of young girls, who had grown up very quickly, alas! who were very precocious, and who very soon became the women that they were, poor vendors of love, always in search of love for which they were paid.

That was why, when he had finished his second ballad, and sometimes even sooner, concupiscent looks appeared in their eyes. The boatman of their dreams, the water-sprite of fairy tales, vanished in the mist of their childish recollections, and the singer re-assumed his real shape, that of musician and strolling player, whom they wished to pay, to be their lover. And the coppers and small silver were showered on him again, with engaging smiles, with the leers of a street-walker, even with: "*p'st, p'st,*" which soon transformed the barrack-like court-yard into an enormous cage full of twittering birds, while some of them could not restrain themselves, but said aloud, rolling their eyes with desire: "How handsome the creature is! Good heavens, how handsome he is!"

He was really handsome, and nobody could deny it, and even too handsome, with a regular beauty which almost palled on people. He had large, almond-shaped, gentle eyes, a Grecian nose, a bow-shaped mouth, hidden by a heavy moustache, and long, black, curly hair; in short, a head fit to be put into a hair-dresser's window, or, better still, perhaps, onto the front page of the ballads which he was singing. But what made him still handsomer, was that his self-conceit had a look of sovereign indifference for he was not satisfied

with not replying to the smiles, the ogles, and the *p'st, p'st's,* by taking no notice of them; but when he had finished he shrugged his shoulders, he winked mischievously, and turned his lips contemptuously, which said very clearly: "The stove is not being heated for you, my little kittens!"

Often, one might have thought that he expressly wished to show his contempt, and that he tried to make himself thought unpoetical in the eyes of all those amorous girls, and to check their love, for he cleared his throat ostentatiously and offensively, more than was necessary, after singing, as if he would have liked to spit at them. But all that did not make him unpoetical in their eyes, and many of them, most of them, who were absolutely mad on him, went so far as to say that *he did it like a swell!*

The girl, who in her enthusiasm had been the first to utter that exclamation of intense passion, and who, after throwing him small silver, had thrown him a twenty-franc gold piece, at last made up her mind to have an explanation. Instead of a *p'st, p'st,* she spoke to him boldly one morning, in the presence of all the others, who religiously held their tongues.

"Come up here," she called out to him, and from habit she added: "I will be very nice, you handsome dark fellow."

At first they were dumbfounded at her audacity, and then all their cheeks flushed with jealousy, and the flame of mad desire shot from their eyes, from every window there came a perfect torrent of:

"Yes, come up, come up." "Don't go to her! Come to me."

And, meanwhile, there was a shower of half-pence, of

francs, of gold coins, as well as of cigars and oranges, while lace pocket handkerchiefs, silk neckties, and scarfs fluttered in the air and fell round the singer, like a flight of many colored butterflies.

He picked up the spoil calmly, almost carelessly, stuffed the money into his pocket, made a bundle of the furbelows, which he tied up as if they had been soiled linen, and then raising himself up, and putting his felt hat on his head, he said:

"Thank you, ladies, but indeed I cannot."

They thought that he did not know how to satisfy so many demands at once, and one of them said: "Let him choose."

"Yes, yes, that is it!" they all exclaimed unanimously.

But he repeated: "I tell you, I cannot."

They thought he was excusing himself out of gallantry, and several of them exclaimed, almost with tears of emotion: "Women are all heart!" And the same voice that had spoken before, (it was one of the girls who wished to settle the matter amicably), said: "We must draw lots."

"Yes, yes, that is it," they all cried. And again there was a religious silence, more religious than before, for it was caused by anxiety, and the beatings of their hearts may have been heard.

The singer profited by it, to say slowly: "I cannot have that either; nor all of you at once, nor one after the other; nothing! I tell you that I cannot."

"Why? Why?" And now they were almost screaming, for they were angry and sorry at the same time. Their cheeks had gone from scarlet to livid,

their eyes flashed fire, and some shook their fists menacingly.

"Silence!" the girl cried, who had spoken first. "Be quiet, you pack of huzzys! Let him explain himself, and tell us why!"

"Yes, yes, let us be quiet! Make him explain himself in God's name!"

Then, in the fierce silence that ensued, the singer said, opening his arms wide, with a gesture of despairing inability to do what they wanted:

"What do you want? It is very amusing, but I cannot do more. I have two girls of my own already, at home."

PROFITABLE BUSINESS

HE certainly did not think himself a saint, nor had he any hypocritical pretensions to virtue, but, nevertheless, he thought as highly of himself as much as he did of anybody else, and perhaps, even a trifle more highly. And that, quite impartially, without any more self love than was necessary, and without his having to accuse himself of being self conceited. He did himself justice, that was all, for he had good moral principles, and he applied them, especially, if the truth must be told, not only to judging the conduct of others, but also, it must be allowed, in a measure for regulating his own conduct, as he would have been very vexed if he had been able to think of himself:

"On the whole, I am what people call a perfectly honorable man."

Luckily, he had never (oh! never), been obliged to doubt that excellent opinion which he had of himself, which he liked to express thus, in his moments of rhetorical expansion:

"My whole life gives me the right to shake hands with myself."

Perhaps a subtle psychologist would have found some flaws in this armor of integrity, which was sanctimoniously satisfied with itself. It was, for example, quite certain that our friend had no scruples in making profit out of the vices or misfortunes of his neighbors, provided that he was not in his own opinion, the person who

was solely, or chiefly responsible for them. But, on the whole, it was only one manner of looking at it, nothing more, and there were plenty of materials for casuistic arguments in it. This kind of discussion is particularly unpleasant to such simple natures as that of this worthy fellow, who would have replied to the psychologist.

"Why go on a wild goose chase? As for me, I am perfectly sincere."

You must not, however, believe that this perfect sincerity prevented him from having elevated views. He prided himself on having a weakness for imagination and the unforeseen, and if he would have been offended at being called a dishonorable man, he would, perhaps have been still more hurt if anybody had attributed middle-class tastes to him.

Accordingly, in love affairs, he expressed a most virtuous horror of adultery, for if he had committed it, it would not have been able to bear that testimony to himself, which was so sweet to his conscience:

"Ah! As for me, I can declare that I never wronged anybody!"

While, on the other hand, he was not satisfied with pleasure which was paid for by the hour, and which debases *the noblest desires of the heart,* to the vulgar satisfaction of a physical requirement. What he required, so he used to say, while lifting his eyes up to heaven was:

"Something rather more ideal than that!"

That search after the ideal did not, indeed, cost him any great effort, as it was limited to not going to licensed houses of ill-fame, and to not accosting street-walkers with the simple words: "How much?"

It consisted chiefly in wishing to be gallant even with such women, and in trying to persuade himself that they liked him for his own sake, and in preferring those whose manner, dress and looks allowed room for suppositions and romantic illusions, such as:

"She might be taken for a little work-girl who has not yet lost her virtue."

"No, I rather think she is a widow, who has met with misfortunes."

"What if she be a fashionable lady in disguise!"

And other nonsense, which he knew to be such, even while imagining it, but whose imaginary flavor was very pleasant to him, all the same.

With such tastes, it was only natural that this pilgrim followed and pushed up against women in the large shops, and whenever there was a crowd, and that he especially looked out for those ladies of easy virtue, for nothing is more exciting than those half-closed shutters, behind which a face is indistinctly seen, and from which one hears a furtive: *"P'st! P'st!"*

He used to say to himself: "Who is she? Is she young and pretty? Is she some old woman, who is terribly skillful at her business, but who yet does not venture to show herself any longer? Or is she some new beginner, who has not yet acquired the boldness of an old hand? In any case, it is the unknown, perhaps, that is my ideal during the time it takes me to find my way upstairs;" and always as he went up, his heart beat, as it does at a first meeting with a beloved mistress.

But he had never felt such a delicious shiver as he did on the day on which he penetrated into that old house in the blind alley in Ménilmontant. He could

The woman was not ugly, although not young.

not have said why, for he had often gone after so-called love in much stranger places; but now, without any reason, he had a presentiment that he was going to meet with an adventure, and that gave him a delightful sensation.

The woman who had made the sign to him, lived on the third floor, and all the way upstairs his excitement increased, until his heart was beating violently when he reached the landing. At the same time, he was going up, he smelt a peculiar odor, which grew stronger and stronger, and which he had tried in vain to analyze, though all he could arrive at was, that it smelt like a chemist's shop.

The door on the right, at the end of the passage, was opened as soon as he put his foot on the landing, and the woman said, in a low voice:

"Come in, my dear."

A whiff of a very strong smell met his nostrils through the open door, and suddenly he exclaimed:

"How stupid I was! I know what it is now; it is carbolic acid, is it not?"

"Yes," the woman replied. "Don't you like it, dear? It is very wholesome, you know."

The woman was not ugly, although not young; she had very good eyes, although they were sad and sunken in her head; evidently she had been crying, very much quite recently, and that imparted a special spice to the vague smile which she put on, so as to appear more amiable.

Seized by his romantic ideas once more, and under the influence of the presentiment which he had had just before, he thought — and the idea filled him with pleasure:

" She is some widow, whom poverty has forced to sell herself."

The room was small, but very clean and tidy, and that confirmed him in his conjecture, as he was curious to verify its truth, he went into the three rooms which opened into one another. The bed-room, came first; next there came a kind of a drawing-room, and then a dining-room, which evidently served as a kitchen, for a Dutch tiled stove stood in the middle of it, on which a stew was simmering, but the smell of carbolic acid was even stronger in that room. He remarked on it, and added with a laugh:

" Do you put it with your soup? "

And as he said this, he laid hold of the handle of the door which led into the next room, for he wanted to see everything, even that nook, which was apparently a store cupboard, but the woman seized him by the arm, and pulled him violently back.

" No, no," she said, almost in a whisper, and in a hoarse and suppliant voice, " no, dear, not there, not there, you must not go in there."

" Why? " he said, for his wish to go in had only become stronger.

" Because if you go in there, you will have no inclination to remain with me, and I so want you to stay. If you only knew! "

" Well, what? " And with a violent movement, he opened the glazed door, when the smell of carbolic acid seemed almost to strike him in the face, but what he saw, made him recoil still more, for on a small iron bedstead, lay the dead body of a woman fantastically illuminated by a single wax candle, and in horror he turned to make his escape.

"Stop, my dear," the woman sobbed; and clinging to him, she told him amidst a flood of tears, that her friend had died two days previously, and that there was no money to bury her. "Because," she said, "you can understand that I want it to be a respectable funeral, we were so very fond of each other! Stop here, my dear, do stop. I only want ten francs more. Don't go away."

They had gone back into the bed-room, and she was pushing him towards the bed:

"No," he said, "let me go. I will give you the ten francs, but I will not stay here; I cannot."

He took his purse out of his pocket, extracted a ten-franc piece, put it on the table, and then went to the door; but when he had reached it, a thought suddenly struck him, as if somebody were reasoning with him, without his knowledge.

"Why lose these ten francs? Why not profit by this woman's good intentions. She certainly did her business bravely, and if I had not known about the matter, I should certainly not have gone away for some time . . . Well then?"

But other obscurer suggestions whispered to him:

"She was her friend! . . . They were so fond of each other! Was it friendship or love? Oh! love apparently. Well, it would surely be avenging morality, if this woman were forced to be faithless to that monstrous love?" And suddenly the man turned round and said in a low and trembling voice: "Look here! If I give you twenty francs instead of ten, I suppose you could buy some flowers for her, as well?"

The unhappy woman's face brightened with pleasure and gratitude.

"Will you really give me twenty?"

"Yes," he replied, "and more perhaps. It quite depends upon yourself."

And with the quiet conscience of an honorable man who, at the same time, is not a fool he said gravely:

"You need only be very complaisant."

And he added, mentally: "Especially as I deserve it, as in giving you twenty francs I am performing a good action."

"REALLY," Paul repeated, "really!"

"Yes, I who am here before you have been violated, and violated by! . . . But if I were to tell you immediately by whom, there would be no story, eh? And as you want a story, eh? And as you want a story, I will tell you all about it from beginning to end, and I shall begin at the beginning.

"I had been shooting over the waste land in the heart of Brittany for a week, which borders on the Black Mountain. It is a desolate and wild country, but it abounds in game. One can walk for hours without meeting a human being, and when one meets anybody, it is just the same as if one had not, for the people are absolutely ignorant of French, and when I got to an inn at night, I had to employ signs to let the people know that I wanted supper and bed.

"As I happened to be in a melancholy frame of mind at the time, that solitude delighted me, and my dog's companionship was quite enough for me, and so you may guess my irritation when I perceived one morning that I was being followed, absolutely followed, by another sportsman who seemed to wish to enter into conversation with me. The day before, I had already noticed him obstructing the horizon several times, and I had attributed it to the chances of sport, which brought us both to the same likely spots for game, but now I could not be mistaken! The fellow was evidently following me, and was stretching his little pair

of compasses as much as he could, so as to keep up with my long strides, and took short cuts, so as to catch me up at the half circle.

"As he seemed bent upon the matter, I naturally grew obstinate also, and he spent his whole day in trying to catch me up, while I spent mine in trying to baffle him, and we seemed to be playing at *hide-and-seek;* the consequences were, that when it was getting dark, I had completely lost myself in the most deserted part of the moor. There was no cottage near, and not even a church spire in the distance. The only land-mark, was the hateful outline of that cursed man, about five hundred yards off.

"Of course he had won the game! I should have to put a good face on the matter, and allow him to join me, or rather I should have to join him myself, if I did not wish to sleep in the open air and with an empty stomach, and so I went up to him, and asked my way in a half-surly manner.

"He replied very affably, that there was no inn in the neighborhood, as the nearest village was five leagues off, but that he lived only about an hour's walk off, and that he considered himself very fortunate in being able to offer me hospitality.

"I was utterly done up, and how could I refuse? So we went off through the heather and furze; I walking slowly because I was so tired, and he went tripping along merrily with his legs like a basset hound's, which seemed untirable.

"And yet he was an old man, and not strongly built, for I could have knocked him over by blowing on him; but how he could walk, the beast!

"But he was not a troublesome companion, as I

imagined he would have been, and he did not at all seem to wish to enter into conversation with me, as I feared he would. When he had given his invitation, and I had accepted it and thanked him in a few words, he did not open his lips again, and we walked on in silence, and only his glances worried me, for I felt them on me, as if he wished to force me into an intimacy, which my closed lips refused. But on the whole, his tenacious looks, which I noticed furtively, appeared sympathetic and even admiring — yes; really admiring!

"But I could not give him as good as he brought, for he was certainly not handsome; his legs were short, and rather bandy and he was thin and narrow-chested. His face was like a bit of parchment, furrowed and wrinkled, without a hair on it to hide the folds in his skin. His hair resembled that of an *Ignorantin* [1] brother, with its gray locks falling onto his greasy collar; he had a nose like a ferret, and rat's eyes, but he was able to offer me food and quarters for the night, and it was not requisite that he should be handsome, in order to do that.

"Capital food, and very comfortable quarters! A manorial dwelling, a real old, well-furnished manor-house; and in the large dining-room, in front of the huge fire-place, where a large fire was blazing, dinner was laid; I will say no more than that! A hotch-potch, which had been stewing since morning, no doubt! A *salmis* of woodcock, in defense of which angels would have taken up arms; buckwheat cakes, in cream, flavored with aniseed, and a cheese, which is a rare thing and hardly ever to be found in Brittany, a cheese

[1] A lay brother in a monastery, who is devoted to the instruction of the poor.— TRANSLATOR.

to make any one eat a four pound loaf if he only smelt the rind! The whole washed down by Chambertin, and then brandy distilled by cider, which was so good that it made a man fancy that he had swallowed a deity in velvet breeches; not to mention the cigars, pure, smuggled havannahs; large, strong, not dry but green, on the contrary, which made a strong and intoxicating smoke.

"And how the little old gentleman stuffed, and drank and smoked! He was an ogre, a choirister, a sapper, and so was I, I must confess, and, upon my word, I cannot remember what we talked about during our Gargantuan feed! But we certainly talked, but what about? About shooting, certainly, and about women most probably. Confound it! Among men, after drinking! Yes, yes, about women, I am quite sure, and he told some funny stories, did the little old man! Especially about a portrait which was hanging over the large fire-place, and which represented his grandmother, a marchioness of the old régime. She was a woman who had certainly played some pranks, and they said that she was still frisky and had good legs and thighs when she was seventy.

"'It is extraordinary,' I remarked, 'how like you are to that portrait.'

"'Yes,' the old man replied with a smile; and then he added in his harsh, tremulous voice: 'I resemble her in everything. I am only sixty, and I feel as if I should have lusty, hot blood in me until I am seventy.'

"And then suddenly, very much moved, and looking at me admiringly, as he had done once before, he said to the portrait:

"'I say, marchioness, what a pity that you did not know this handsome young fellow!'

"I remembered that apostrophe and that look very well, when I went to bed about an hour later, nearly drunk, in the large room papered in white and gold, to which I was shown by a tall, broad-shouldered footman, who wished me good-night in Breton.

"*Good-night,* yes! But that implied going to sleep, which was just what I could not do. The Chambertin, the cider brandy and the cigars had certainly made me drunk, but not so as to overcome me altogether. On the contrary, I was excited, my nerves were highly strung, my blood was heated, and I was in a half-sleep in which I felt that I was very much alive, and my whole being was in a vibration and expansion, just as if I had been smoking hashecah.

"Of course! That was it; I was dreaming while I was awake; but I saw the door open and the marchioness come in, who had stepped down, out of her frame. She had taken off her furbelows, and was in her nightgown. Her high head-dress was replaced by a simple knot of ribbon, which confined her powdered hair into a small chignon, but I recognized her quite plainly, by the trembling light of the candle which she was carrying. It was her face with its piercing eyes, its pointed nose and its smiling and sensual mouth. She did not look so young to me as she appeared in her portrait. Bah! Perhaps that was merely caused by the feeble, flickering light! But I had not even time to account for it, not to reflect on the strangeness of the sight, nor to discuss the matter with myself and to say: 'Am I dead drunk, or is it a ghost?'

"No, I had no time, and that is the fact, for the can-

dle was suddenly blown out and the marchioness was in my bed and holding me in her arms, and one fixed idea, the only one that I had, haunted me, which was:

"'Had the marchioness good limbs, and was she still frisky at seventy?' And I did not care much if she was seventy and if she was a ghost or not; I only thought of one thing: 'Has she really good limbs?'"

"By Jove, yes! She did not speak. Oh, marchioness! marchioness! And suddenly in spite of myself and to convince myself that it was not a mere fantastic dream, I exclaimed:

"'Why, good heavens! I am not dreaming!'

"'No, you are not dreaming,' two lips replied, trying to press themselves against mine.

"But, oh! horror! The mouth smelt of cigars and brandy! The voice was that of the little old man!

"With a bound I sent him flying on to the ground, and jumped out of bed, shouting:

"'Beast! beast!'

"Then I heard the door slam, and bare feet pattering on the stairs as he ran away; so I dressed hastily in the dark and went downstairs, still shouting.

"In the hall below, where I could see through the upper windows that the dawn was breaking, I met the broad-shouldered footman, who was holding a great cudgel in his hand. He was bawling also, in Breton, and pointed to the open door, outside where my dog was waiting. What could I say to this savage who did not speak French? Should I face his cudgel? There was no reason for doing so; and besides, I was even more ashamed than furious; so I hastily took up my gun and my game-bag, which were in the hall, and went off without turning round.

"Disgusted with sport in that part of the country, I returned to Brest the same day, and there, timidly and with many precautions, I tried to find out something about the little old man. . . .

"'Oh, I know!' somebody replied at last to my question; 'you are speaking of the manor-house at Hervénidozse, where the old countess lives, who dresses like a man and sleeps with her coachman.'

"And with a deep sigh of relief, and much to the astonishment of my informant, I replied:

"'Oh! so much the better!'"

JEROBOAM

ANYONE who said, or even insinuated, that the Reverend William Greenfield, Vicar of St. Sampson's, Tottenham, did not make his wife Anna perfectly happy, would certainly have been very malicious. In their twelve years of married life, he had honored her with twelve children, and could anybody decently ask anything more of a saintly man?

Saintly to heroism in truth! For his wife Anna, who was endowed with invaluable virtues, which made her a model among wives and a paragon among mothers, had not been equally endowed physically, for, in one word, she was hideous. Her hair, which was coarse though it was thin, was the color of the national *half-and-half,* but of thick *half-and-half* which looked as if it had been already swallowed several times, and her complexion, which was muddy and pimply, looked as if it were covered with sand mixed with brick-dust. Her teeth, which were long and protruding, seemed as if they were about to start out of their sockets in order to escape from that mouth with scarcely any lips, whose sulphurous breath had turned them yellow. They were evidently suffering from bile.

Her china-blue eyes looked vaguely, one very much to the right and the other very much to the left, with a divergent and frightened squint; no doubt in order that they might not see her nose, of which they felt ashamed. And they were quite right! Thin, soft, long, pendant, sallow, and ending in a violet knob, it

irresistibly reminded those who saw it of something which cannot be mentioned except in a medical treatise. Her body, through the inconceivable irony of nature, was at the same time thin and flabby, wooden and chubby, without having either the elegance of slimness or the rounded gracefulness of stoutness. It might have been taken for a body which had formerly been adipose, but which had now grown thin, while the covering had remained floating on the framework.

She was evidently nothing but skin and bones, but then she had too many bones and too little skin.

It will be seen that the reverend gentleman had done his duty, his whole duty, more than his duty, in sacrificing a dozen times on this altar. Yes, a dozen times bravely and loyally! A dozen times, and his wife could not deny it nor dispute the number, because the children were there to prove it. A dozen times, and not one less!

And alas! not once more; and that was the reason why, in spite of appearances, Mrs. Anna Greenfield ventured to think, in the depths of her heart, that the Reverend William Greenfield, Vicar of St. Sampson's, Tottenham, had not made her perfectly happy; and she thought so all the more as, for four years now, she had been obliged to renounce all hope of that annual sacrifice, which was so easy and so fugitive formerly, but which had now fallen into disuse. In fact, at the birth of the twelfth child, the reverend gentleman had expressly said to her:

"God has greatly blessed our union, my dear Anna. We have reached the sacred number of the twelve tribes of Israel, and were we now to persevere in the works of the flesh, it would be mere debauchery, and I

cannot suppose that you would wish me to end my exemplary life in lustful practices."

His wife blushed and looked down, and the holy man, with the legitimate pride of virtue which is its own reward, audibly thanked Heaven that he was "not as other men are."

A model among wives and the paragon of mothers, Anna lived with him for four years on those terms, without complaining to anyone, and contented herself by praying fervently to God that He would mercifully inspire her husband with the desire to begin a second series of the twelve tribes. At times even, in order to make her prayers more efficacious, she tried to compass that end by culinary means. She spared no pains, and gorged the reverend gentleman with highly-seasoned dishes. Hare soup, ox-tails stewed in sherry, the green fat in turtle soup, stewed mushrooms, Jerusalem artichokes, celery, and horse-radish; hot sauces, truffles, hashes with wine and cayenne pepper in them, curried lobsters, pies made of cocks' combs, oysters, and the soft roe of fish; and all these dishes were washed down by strong beer and generous wines, Scotch ale, Burgundy, dry champagne, brandy, whiskey and gin; in a word, by that numberless array of alcoholic drinks with which the English people love to heat their blood.

And, as a matter of fact, the reverend gentleman's blood became very heated, as was shown by his nose and cheeks, but in spite of this, the powers above were inexorable, and he remained quite indifferent as regards his wife, who was unhappy and thoughtful at the sight of that protruding nasal appendage, which, alas! was alone in its glory.

She became thinner, and at the same time, flabbier than ever, and almost began to lose her trust in God, when, suddenly, she had an inspiration. Was it not, perhaps, the work of devil?

She did not care to inquire too closely into the matter, as she thought it a very good idea, and it was this:

"Go to the Universal Exhibition in Paris, and there, perhaps, you will discover the secret to make yourself loved."

Decidedly luck favored her, for her husband immediately gave her permission to go, and as soon as she got into the *Esplanade des Invalides,* she saw the Algerian dancers, and she said to herself.

"Surely this would inspire William with the desire to be the father of the thirteenth tribe!"

But how could she manage to get him to be present at such abominable orgies? For she could not hide from herself that it was an abominable exhibition, and she knew how scandalized he would be at their voluptuous movements. She had no doubt that the devil had led her there, but she could not take her eyes off the scene, and it gave her an idea; and so for nearly a fortnight you might have seen the poor, unattractive woman sitting, and attentively and curiously watching the swaying hips of the Algerian women. She was learning.

The very evening of her return to London, she rushed into her husband's bedroom, disrobed herself in an instant, except for a thin gauze covering, and for the first time in her life appeared before him in all the ugliness of her semi-nudity.

"Come, come," the saintly man stammered out, "are

you — are you mad, Anna! What demon has possessed you? Why inflict the disgrace of such a spectacle on me?"

But she did not listen to him, and did not reply, but suddenly she also began to sway her hips about like an almah.[1] The reverend gentleman could not believe his eyes, and in his stupefaction, he did not think of covering them with his hands or even of shutting them. He looked at her, stupefied and dumbfounded, a prey to the hypnotism of ugliness. He watched her as she came forward and retired, and went up and down, as she skipped and wriggled, and threw herself into extraordinary attitudes. For a long time he sat motionless and almost unable to speak. He only said in a low voice:

"Oh, Lord! To think that twelve times! . . . twelve times! . . . a whole dozen!"

However, she fell into a chair, panting and worn out, and said to herself:

"Thank Heaven! William looks like he used to do formerly on the days that he honored me. Thank Heaven! There will be a thirteenth tribe, and then a fresh series of tribes, for William is very methodical in all that he does!"

But William merely took a blanket off the bed and threw it over her, saying in a voice of thunder:

"Your name is no longer Anna, Mrs. Greenfield; for the future you shall be called Jezabel. I only regret that I have twelve times mingled my blood with your impure blood." And then, seized by pity, he added: "If you were only in a state of inebriety, of intoxication, I could excuse you."

[1] Egyptian dancing girl.— TRANSLATOR.

"Well, yes, yes!" she exclaimed, repentantly, "yes, I am in that state . . . Forgive me, William — forgive a poor drunken woman!"

"I will forgive you, Anna," he replied, and he gave her a wash-hand basin, saying: "Cold water will do you good, and when your head is clear, remember the lesson which you must learn from this occurrence."

"What lesson?" she asked, humbly.

"That people ought never to depart from their usual habits."

"But why, then, William," she asked, timidly, "have you changed your habits?"

"Hold your tongue!" he cried —"hold your tongue, Jezabel! Have you not got over your intoxication yet? For twelve years I certainly followed the divine precept: *increase and multiply,* once a year. But since then, I have grown accustomed to something else, and I do not wish to alter my habits."

And the Reverend William Greenfield, Vicar of St. Sampson's, Tottenham, the saintly man whose blood was inflamed by heating food and liquor, whose ears were like full-blown poppies and who had a nose like a tomato, left his wife and, as had been his habit for four years, went to make love to Polly, the servant.

"Now, Polly," he said, "you are a clever girl, and I mean, through you, to teach Mrs. Greenfield a lesson she will never forget. I will try and see what I can do for you."

And in order to this, he called her his little Jezabel, and said to her, with an unctuous smile:

"Call me Jeroboam! You don't understand why? Neither do I, but that does not matter. Take off all

your things, Polly, and show yourself to Mrs. Greenfield."

The servant did as she was bidden, and the result was that Mrs. Greenfield never again hinted to her husband the desirability of laying the foundation of a thirteenth tribe.

THE LOG

IT was a small drawing-room, with thick hangings, and with a faint, judicious smell of flowers and scents about it. A large fire was burning in the grate, while one lamp, covered with a shade of old lace, on the corner of the mantelpiece threw a soft light onto the two persons who were talking.

She, the mistress of the house, was an old lady with white hair, but one of those adorable old ladies whose unwrinkled skin is as smooth as the finest paper, and scented, impregnated with perfume as the delicate essences which she had used in her bath for so many years had penetrated through the epidermis.

He was a very old friend, who had never married, a constant friend, a companion in the journey of life, but nothing else.

They had not spoken for about a minute, and they were both looking at the fire, dreaming no matter of what, in one of those moments of friendly silence between people who have no need to be constantly talking in order to be happy together, when suddenly a large log, a stump covered with burning roots, fell out. It fell over the fire-dogs into the drawing-room, and rolled onto the carpet, scattering great sparks all round. The old lady sprang up with a little scream, as if she was going to run away, while he kicked the log back onto the hearth and trod out all the burning sparks with his boots.

When the disaster was repaired, there was a strong

smell of burning, and sitting down opposite to his friend, the man looked at her with a smile, and said, as he pointed to the log:

"That is the reason why I never married."

She looked at him in astonishment, with the inquisitive gaze of women who wish to know everything, that eye which women have who are no longer very young, in which complicated, and often malicious curiosity is reflected, and she asked:

"How so?"

"Oh! that is a long story," he replied; "a rather sad and unpleasant story.

"My old friends were often surprised at the coldness which suddenly sprang up between one of my best friends, whose Christian name was Julien, and myself. They could not understand how two such intimate and inseparable friends as we had been could suddenly become almost strangers to one another, and I will tell you the reason of it.

"He and I used to live together at one time. We were never apart, and the friendship that united us seemed so strong that nothing could break it.

"One evening when he came home, he told me that he was going to get married, and it gave me a shock as if he had robbed me or betrayed me. When a man's friend marries, it is all over between them. The jealous affection of a woman, that suspicious, uneasy, and carnal affection, will not tolerate that sturdy and frank attachment, that attachment of the mind, of the heart, and mutual confidence which exists between two men.

"You see, however great the love may be that unites them, a man and a woman are always strangers in mind

and intellect; they remain belligerants, they belong to different races. There must always be a conqueror and a conquered, a master and a slave; now the one, now the other — they are never two equals. They press each other's hands, those hands trembling with amorous passion; but they never press them with a long, strong, loyal pressure, with that pressure which seems to open hearts and to lay them bare in a burst of sincere, strong, manly affection. Philosophers of old, instead of marrying and pro-creating children who would abandon them as a consolation for their old age, sought for a good, reliable friend, and grew old with him in that communion of thought which can only exist between men.

"Well, my friend Julien married. His wife was pretty, charming, a little, light, curly-haired, plump, bright woman, who seemed to worship him; and at first I went but rarely to their house, as I was afraid of interfering with their affection, and afraid of being in their way. But somehow they attracted me to their house; they were constantly inviting me, and seemed very fond of me. Consequently, by degrees I allowed myself to be allured by the charm of their life. I often dined with them, and frequently, when I returned home at night, I thought that I would do as he had done, and get married, as I now found my empty house very dull.

"They seemed very much in love with one another, and were never apart.

"Well, one evening Julien wrote and asked me to go to dinner, and I naturally went.

"'My dear fellow,' he said, 'I must go out directly

afterwards on business, and I shall not be back until eleven o'clock, but I shall be at eleven precisely, and I reckon you to keep Bertha company.'

"The young woman smiled.

"'It was my idea,' she said, 'to send for you.'

"I held out my hand to her.

"'You are as nice as ever,' I said, and I felt a long, friendly pressure of my fingers, but I paid no attention to it; so we sat down to dinner, and at eight o'clock Julien went out.

"As soon as he had gone, a kind of strange embarrassment immediately seemed to arise between his wife and me. We had never been alone together yet, and in spite of our daily increasing intimacy, this *tête-à-tête* placed us in a new position. At first I spoke vaguely of those indifferent matters with which one fills up an embarrassing silence, but she did not reply, and remained opposite to me with her head down in an undecided manner, as if she were thinking over some difficult subject, and as I was at a loss for commonplace ideas, I held my tongue. It is surprising how hard it is at times to find anything to say.

"And then, again, I felt in the air, I felt in the unseen, something which is impossible for me to express, that mysterious premonition which tells you beforehand of the secret intentions, be they good or evil, of another person with respect to yourself.

"That painful silence lasted some time, and then Bertha said to me:

"'Will you kindly put a log on the fire, for it is going out.'

"So I opened the box where the wood was kept,

"I shall not be back until eleven o'clock."

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which was placed just where yours is, took out the largest log, and put it on the top of the others, which were three-parts burnt, and then silence reigned in the room again.

" In a few minutes the log was burning so brightly that it scorched our faces, and the young woman raised her eyes to me — eyes that had a strange look to me.

" ' It is too hot now,' she said; ' let us go and sit on the sofa over there.'

" So we went and sat on the sofa, and then she said suddenly, looking me full in the face:

" ' What should you do if a woman were to tell you that she was in love with you? '

" ' Upon my word,' I replied, very much at a loss for an answer, ' I cannot foresee such a case; but it would very much depend upon the woman.'

" She gave a hard, nervous, vibrating laugh; one of those false laughs which seem as if they must break thin glasses, and then she added: ' Men are never either venturesome nor acute.' And after a moment's silence, she continued: ' Have you ever been in love, Monsieur Paul? ' I was obliged to acknowledge that I certainly had been, and she asked me to tell her all about it, whereupon I made up some story or other. She listened to me attentively with frequent sighs of approbation and contempt, and then suddenly she said:

" ' No, you understand nothing about the subject. It seems to me, that real love must unsettle the mind, upset the nerves and distract the head; that it must — how shall I express it? — be dangerous, even terrible, almost criminal and sacrilegious; that it must be a kind of treason; I mean to say that it is almost bound to

break laws, fraternal bonds, sacred obstacles; when love is tranquil, easy, lawful and without dangers, is it really love?'

"I did not know what answer to give her, and I made this philosophical reflection to myself: 'Oh! female brain, here indeed you show yourself!'

"While speaking, she had assumed a demure, saintly air; and resting on the cushions, she stretched herself out at full length, with her head on my shoulder and her dress pulled up a little, so as to show her red silk stockings, which the fire-light made look still brighter. In a minute or two she continued:

"'I suppose I have frightened you?' I protested against such a notion, and she leant against my breast altogether, and without looking at me she said: 'If I were to tell you that I love you, what would you do?'

"And before I could think of an answer, she had thrown her arms round my neck, had quickly drawn my head down and put her lips to mine.

"Oh! My dear friend, I can tell you that I did not feel at all happy! What! deceive Julien? become the lover of this little silly, wrong-headed, cunning woman, who was no doubt terribly sensual, and for whom her husband was already not sufficient! To betray him continually, to deceive him, to play at being in love merely because I was attracted by forbidden fruit, danger incurred and friendship betrayed! No, that did not suit me, but what was I to do? To imitate Joseph, would be acting a very stupid, and, moreover, difficult part, for this woman was maddening in her perfidy, inflamed by audacity, palpitating and excited. Let the man who has never felt on his lips, the warm kiss of a

woman who is ready to give herself to him, throw the first stone at me . . .

" . . . Well, a minute more . . . you understand what I mean? A minute more and . . . I should have been . . . no, she would have been . . . I beg your pardon, he would have been! . . . when a loud noise made us both jump up. The log had fallen into the room, knocking over the fire-irons and the fender, and onto the carpet which it had scorched, and had rolled under an arm-chair, which it would certainly set alight.

" I jumped up like a madman, and as I was replacing that log which had saved me, on the fire, the door opened hastily, and Julien came in.

" ' I have done,' he said, in evident pleasure. ' The business was over two hours sooner than I expected! '

" Yes, my dear friend, without that log, I should have been caught in the very act, and you know what the consequences would have been!

" You may be sure that I took good care never to be overtaken in a similar situation again; never, never. Soon afterwards I saw that Julien was giving me the ' cold shoulder,' as they say. His wife was evidently undermining our friendship; by degrees he got rid of me, and we have altogether ceased to meet.

" I have not got married which ought not to surprise you, I think."

MARGOT'S TAPERS

I

MARGOT FRESQUYL had allowed herself to be tempted for the first time by the delicious intoxication of the mortal sin of loving, on the evening of Midsummer Day.

While most of the young people were holding each others' hands and dancing in a circle round the burning logs, the girl had slyly taken the deserted road which led to the wood, leaning on the arm of her partner, a tall, vigorous farm servant, whose Christian name was Tiennou, which, by the way, was the only name he had borne from his birth. For he was entered on the register of births with this curt note: *Father and mother unknown;* he having been found on St. Stephen's Day under a shed on a farm, where some poor, despairing wretch had abandoned him, perhaps even without turning her head round to look at him.

For months Tiennou had madly worshiped that fair, pretty girl, who was now trembling as he clasped her in his arms, under the sweet coolness of the leaves. He religiously rememberd how she had dazzled him — like some ecstastic vision, the recollection of which always remains imprinted on the eyes — the first time that he saw her in her father's mill, where he had gone to ask for work. She stood out all rosy from the warmth of the day, amidst the impalpable clouds of flour, which diffused an indistinct whiteness through the

air. With her hair hanging about her in untidy curls, as if she had just awakened from a profound sleep, she stretched herself lazily, with her bare arms clasped behind her head, and yawned so as to show her white teeth, which glistened like those of a young wolf, and her maiden nudity appeared beneath her unbuttoned bodice with innocent immodesty. He told her that he thought her adorable, so stupidly, that she made fun of him and scourged him with her cruel laughter; and, from that day he spent his life in Margot's shadow. He might have been taken for one of those wild beasts ardent with desire, which ceaselessly utter maddened cries to the stars on nights when the constellations bathe the dark coverts in warm light. Margot met him wherever she went, and seized with pity, and by degrees agitated by his sobs, by his dumb entreaties, by the burning looks which flashed from his large eyes, she had returned his love; she had dreamt restlessly that during a whole night she had been in his vigorous arms which pressed her like corn that is being crushed in the mill, that she was obeying a man who had subdued her, and learning strange things which the other girls talked about in a low voice when they were drawing water at the well.

She had, however, been obliged to wait until Midsummer Day, for the miller watched over his heiress very carefully.

The two lovers told each other all this as they were going along the dark road, and innocently giving utterance to words of happiness, which rise to the lips like the forgotten refrain of a song. At times they were silent, not knowing what more to say, and not daring to embrace each other any more. The night was soft

and warm, the warmth of a half-closed alcove in a bedroom, and which had the effect of a tumbler of new wine.

The leaves were sleeping motionless and in supreme peace, and in the distance they could hear the monotonous sound of the brooks as they flowed over the stones. Amidst the dull noise of the insects, the nightingales were answering each other from tree to tree, and everything seemed alive with hidden life, and the sky was bright with such a shower of falling stars, that they might have been taken for white forms wandering among the dark trunks of the trees.

"Why have we come?" Margot asked, in a panting voice. "Do you not want me any more, Tiennou?"

"Alas! I dare not," he replied. "Listen: you know that I was picked up on the high road, that I have nothing in the world except my two arms, and that Miller Fresquyl will never let his daughter marry a poor devil like me."

She interrupted him with a painful gesture, and putting her lips to his, she said:

"What does that matter? I love you, and I want you . . . Take me . . ."

And it was thus, on St. John's night, Margot Fresquyl for the first time yielded to the mortal sin of love.

II

Did the miller guess his daughter's secret, when he heard her singing merrily from dawn till dusk, and saw her sitting dreaming at her window instead of sewing as she was in the habit of doing?

Did he see it when she threw ardent kisses from the tips of her fingers to her lover at a distance?

However that might have been, he shut poor Margot in the mill as if it had been a prison. No more love or pleasure, no more meetings at night at the verge of the wood. When she chatted with the passers-by, when she tried furtively to open the gate of the enclosure and to make her escape, her father beat her as if she had been some disobedient animal, until she fell on her knees on the floor with clasped hands, scarcely able to move and her whole body covered with purple bruises.

She pretended to obey him, but she revolted in her whole being, and the string of bitter insults which he heaped upon her rang in her head. With clenched hands, and a gesture of terrible hatred, she cursed him for standing in the way of her love, and at night, she rolled about on her bed, bit the sheets, moaned, stretched herself out for imaginary embraces, maddened by the sensual heat with which her body was still palpitating. She called out Tiennou's name aloud, she broke the peaceful stillness of the sleeping house with her heartrending sobs, and her dejected voice drowned the monotonous sound of the water that was dripping under the arch of the mill, between the immovable paddles of the wheel.

III

THEN there came that terrible week in October when the unfortunate young fellows who had drawn bad numbers had to join their regiments.[1] Tiennou was

[1] Written before universal service was obligatory, and when soldiers were selected by conscription, a certain amount of those who drew high numbers, being exempt from service.— TRANSLATOR.

one of them, and Margot was in despair to think that she should not see him for five interminable years, that they could not even, at that hour of sad farewells, be alone and exchange those consoling words which afterwards alleviate the pain of absence.

Tiennou prowled about the house, like a starving beggar, and one morning, while the miller was mending the wheel, he managed to see Margot.

"I will wait for you in the old place to-night," he whispered, in terrible grief. "I know it is the last time . . . I shall throw myself into some deep hole in the river if you do not come! . . ."

"I will be there, Tiennou," she replied, in a bewildered manner. "I swear I will be there . . . even if I have to do something terrible to enable me to come!"

. . . . . .

The village was burning in the dark night, and the flames, fanned by the wind, rose up like sinister torches. The thatched roofs, the ricks of corn, the haystacks, and the barns fell in, and crackled like rockets, while the sky looked as if they were illuminated by an *aurora borealis*. Fresquyl's mill was smoking, and its calcined ruins were reflected on the deep water. The sheep and cows were running about the fields in terror, the dogs were howling, and the women were sitting on the broken furniture, and were crying and wringing their hands; while during all this time Margot was abandoning herself to her lover's ardent caresses, and with her arms round his neck, she said to him, tenderly:

"You see that I have kept my promise . . . I set fire to the mill so that I might be able to get out.

So much the worse if all have suffered. But I do not care as long as you are happy in having me, and love me!"

And pointing to the fire which was still burning fiercely in the distance, she added with a burst of savage laughter:

"Tiennou, we shall not have such beautiful tapers at out wedding Mass when you come back from your regiment!"

And thus it was that for the second time Margot Fresquyl yielded to the mortal sin of love.

CAUGHT IN THE VERY ACT

"IT is certain," Sulpice de Laurièr said, "that I had absolutely forgotten the date on which I was to allow myself to be taken in the very act, with a mistress for the occasion. As neither my wife nor I had any serious nor plausible reason for a divorce, not even the slightest incompatibility of temper, and as there is always a risk of not softening the heart of even the most indulgent judge when he is told that the parties have agreed to drag their load separately, each for themselves, that they are too frisky, too fond of pleasure and of wandering about from place to place to continue the conjugal experiment, we between us got up the ingenious stage arrangement of, 'a serious wrong . . .'

"This was funnier than all the rest, and under any other circumstances it would have been repugnant to me to mix up our servants in the affair like so many others do, or to distress that pretty little, fair and delicate Parisian woman, even though it were only in appearance and to pass as a common *Sganarelle* with the manners of a carter, in the eyes of some scoundrel of a footman, or of some lady's maid. And so when Maître Le Chevrier, that kind lawyer who certainly knows more female secrets than the most fashionable confessor, gave a startled exclamation on seeing me still in my dressing-gown, and slowly smoking a cigar like an idler who has no engagements down on his tablets, and who is quietly waiting for the usual time for

dressing and going to dine at his club, he exclaimed:

"'Have you forgotten that this is the day, at the *Hôtel de Bade,* between five and six o'clock? In an hour, Madame de Laurière will be at the office of the Police Commissary in the Rue de Provence, with her uncle and Maître Cantenac . . .'

"An hour; I only had an hour, sixty short minutes to dress in, to take a room, find a woman and persuade her to go with me immediately, and to excite her feelings, so that this extravagant adventure might not appear too equivocal to the Commissary of Police. One hour in which to carry out such a program was enough to make a man lose his head. And there were no possible means of putting off that obligatory entertainment, to let Madame Le Laurière know in time, and to gain a few minutes more.

"'Have you found a woman, at any rate?' Maître de Chevrier continued anxiously.

"'No, my dear sir!'

"I immediately began to think of the whole string of my dear female friends. Should I choose Liline Ablette, who could refuse me nothing, Blanch Rebus, who was the best comrade a man ever had, or Lalie Spring, that luxurious creature, who was constantly in search of something new? Neither one nor the other of them, for it was ninety-nine chances to one that all these confounded girls were in the *Bois de Boulogne,* or at their dressmakers!"

"'Bah! Just pick up the first girl you meet on the pavement.'

"And before the hour was up, I was bolting the door of a room, which looked out onto the boulevard.

"The woman whom I had picked up, as she was

walking past the *cafés,* from the *Vaudeville* to *Tortoni's,* was twenty at the most. She had an impudent, snub nose, as if it had been turned up in fun by a fillip, large eyes with deep rims round them; her lips were too red, and she had the slow, indolent walk of a girl who goes in for debauchery too freely and who began too soon, but she was pretty, and her linen was very clean and neat. And she was evidently used to chance love-making, and had a way of undressing herself in two or three rapid movements, of throwing her toggery to the right and left, until she was extremely lightly clad, and of throwing herself onto the bed which astonished me as a sight that was well worth seeing.

"She did not talk much, though she began by saying: 'Pay up at once, old man . . . You don't look like a fellow who would bilk a girl, but it puts me into better trim when I have been paid.'

"I gave her two napoleons, and she eyed me with gratitude and respect at the same time, but also with that uneasy look of a girl who asks herself: 'What does this tool expect for it?'

"The whole affair began to amuse me, and I must confess that I was rather taken with her, for she had a beautiful figure and complexion, and I was hoping that the Commissary would not come directly, when there was a loud rapping at the door.

"She sat up with a start, and grew so pale that one would have said she was about to faint.

"'What a set of pigs, to come and interrupt people like this!' she muttered between her teeth; while I affected the most complete calm.

"'Somebody who has made a mistake in the room, my dear,' I said.

She sat up with a start.

"But this noise increased, and suddenly I heard a man's voice saying clearly and authoritatively:

"'Open the door, in the name of the law!'

"On hearing that, one would have thought that she had received a shock from an electric battery, by the nimble manner in which she jumped out of bed; and quickly putting on her stays and her dress anyhow, she endeavored to discover a way out in every corner of the room, like a wild beast, trying to escape from its cage. I thought that she was going to throw herself out of the window, so I seized hold of her to prevent her.

"The unfortunate creature acted like a madwoman, and when she felt my arm round her waist, she cried in a hoarse voice:

"'I see it . . . You have sold me . . . You thought that I should expose myself. . . . Oh! you filthy brutes — you filthy brutes!'

"And suddenly, passing from abuse to entreaties, pale and with chattering teeth, she threw herself at my feet, and said, in a low voice:

"'Listen to me, my dear: you don't look a bad sort of fellow, and you would not like them to lock me up. I have a kid and the old woman to keep. Hide me behind the bed, do, and please don't give me up. . . . I will make it up to you, and you shall have no cause for grumbling. . . .'

"At that moment however, the lock which they had unscrewed fell onto the floor with a metallic sound, and Madame de Laurière and the Police Commissary, wearing his tricolored scarf, appeared in the door, while behind them the heads of the uncle and of the lawyer could be seen indistinctly in the background.

"The girl had uttered a cry of terror and going up to the Commissary she said, panting:

"'I swear to you that I am not guilty, that I was not . . . I will tell you everything if you will promise me not to tell them that I spilt, for they would pay me out. . . .'

"The Commissary, who was surprised, but who guessed that there was something which was not quite clear behind all this, forgot to draw up his report, and so the lawyer went up to him and said:

"'Well, monsieur, what are we waiting for?'

"But he paid no attention to anything but the woman, and looking at her sharply and suspiciously through his gold-rimmed spectacles, he said to her in a hard voice:

"'Your names and surnames?'

"'Juliette Randal, or as I am generally called, Jujutte Pipehead.'

"'So you will swear you were not ——'

"She interrupted him eagerly:

"'I swear it, monsieur, and I know that my little man had nothing to do with it either. He was only keeping a look-out while the others collared the swag. . . . I will swear that I can account for every moment of my time that night. Roquin was drunk, and told me everything. . . . They got five thousand francs from Daddy Zacharias, and of course Roquin had his share, but he did not work with his partners. It was Minon Ménilmuche, whom they call *Drink-without-Thirst,* who held the gardener's hands, and who bled him with a blow from his knife.'

"The Commissary let her run on, and when she had

finished, he questioned me, as if I had belonged to Jujutte's band.

"'Your name, Christian name, and profession?'.

"'Marquis Sulpice de Laurièr, living on my own private income, at 24, Rue de Galilee.'

"'De Laurièr? Oh, very well. . . . Excuse me, monsieur, but at Madame de Laurière's request, I declare formally before these gentlemen, who will be able to give evidence, that the girl Juliette Randal, whom they call *Jujutte Tête-de-Pipe,* is your mistress. You are at liberty to go, Monsieur le Marquis, and you, girl Randal answer my questions.'

"Thus, by the most extraordinary chance, our divorce suit created a sensation which I had certainly never foreseen. I was obliged to appear in the Assize Court as a witness in the celebrated case of those burglars, when three of them were condemned to death, and to undergo the questioning of the idiotic Presiding Judge, who tried by all means in his power to make me acknowledge that I was Jujutte Tête-de-Pipe's regular lover; and in consequence, ever since then I have passed as an ardent seeker after novel sensations, and a man who wallows in the lowest depths of the Parisian dunghill.

"I cannot say that this unjust reputation has brought me any pleasant love affairs. Women are so perverse, so absurd, and so curious!"

THE CONFESSION

MONSIEUR DE CHAMPDELIN had no reason to complain of his lot as a married man; nor could he accuse destiny of having played him in a bad turn, as it does so many others, for it would have been difficult to find a more desirable, merrier, prettier little woman, or one who was easier to amuse and to guide than his wife. To see the large, limpid eyes which illuminated her fair, girlish face, one would think that her mother must have spent whole nights before her birth, in looking dreamily at the stars, and so had become, as it were, impregnated with their magic brightness. And one did not know which to prefer — her bright, silky hair, or her slightly *restroussé* nose, with its vibrating nostrils, her red lips, which looked as alluring as a ripe peach, her beautiful shoulders, her delicate ears, which resembled mother-of-pearl, or her slim waist and rounded figure, which would have delighted and tempted a sculptor.

And then she was always merry, overflowing with youth and life, never dissatisfied, only wishing to enjoy herself, to laugh, to love and be loved, and putting all the house into a tumult, as if it had been a great cage full of birds. In spite of all this, however, that worn out fool, Champdelin, had never cared much about her, but had left that charming garden lying waste, and almost immediately after their honeymoon, he had resumed his usual bachelor habits, and had begun to lead the same fast life that he had done of old.

It was stronger than he, for his was one of those libertine natures which are constant targets for love, and which never resign themselves to domestic peace and happiness. The last woman who came across him, in a love adventure, was always the one whom he loved best, and the mere contact with a petticoat inflamed him, and made him commit the most imprudent actions.

As he was not hard to please, he fished, as it were, in troubled waters, went after the ugly ones and the pretty ones alike, was bold even to impudence, was not to be kept off by mistakes, nor anger, nor modesty, nor threats, though he sometimes fell into a trap and got a thrashing from some relative or jealous lover; he withstood all attempts to get hush-money out of him, and became only all the more enamored of vice and more ardent in his lures and pursuit of love affairs on that account.

But the work-girls and the shop-girls and all the tradesmen's wives in Saint Martéjoux knew him, and made him pay for their whims and their coquetry, and had to put up with his love-making. Many of them smiled or blushed when they saw him under the tall plane-trees in the public garden, or met him in the unfrequented, narrow streets near the Cathedral, with his thin, sensual face, whose looks had something satyr-like about them, and some of them used to laugh at him and make fun of him, though they ran away when he went up to them. And when some friend or other, who was sorry that he could forget himself so far, used to say to him, when he was at a loss for any other argument: "And your wife, Champdelin? Are you not afraid that she will have her revenge and pay you out in your own

coin?" his only reply was a contemptuous and incredulous shrug of the shoulders.

She deceive him, indeed; she, who was as devout, as virtuous, and as ignorant of forbidden things as a nun, who cared no more for love than she did for an old slipper! She, who did not even venture on any veiled allusions, who was always laughing, who took life as it came, who performed her religious duties with edifying assiduity, she to pay him back, so as to make him look ridiculous, and to gad about at night? Never! Anyone who could think such a thing must have lost his senses.

However, one summer day, when the roofs all seemed red-hot, and the whole town appeared dead, Monsieur de Champdelin had followed two milliner's girls, with bandboxes in their hands from street to street, whispering nonsense to them, and promising beforehand to give them anything they asked him for, and had gone after them as far as the Cathedral. In their fright, they took refuge there, but he followed them in, and, emboldened by the solitude of the nave, and by the perfect silence in the building, he became more enterprising and bolder. They did not know how to defend themselves, or to escape from him, and were trembling at his daring attempts, and at his kisses, when he saw a confessional whose doors were open, in one of the side chapels. "We should be much more comfortable in there, my little dears," he said, going into it, as if to get such an unexpected nest ready for them.

But they were quicker than he, and throwing themselves against the grated door, they pushed it to before he could turn round, and locked him in. At first he thought it was only a joke, and it amused him; but when

they began to laugh heartily and putting their tongues at him, as if he had been a monkey in a cage, and overwhelmed him with insults, he first of all grew angry, and then humble, offering to pay well for his ransom, and he implored them to let him out, and tried to escape like a mouse does out of a trap. They, however, did not appear to hear him, but naively bowed to him ceremoniously, wished him good night, and ran out as fast as they could.

Champdelin was in despair; he did not know what to do, and cursed his bad luck. What would be the end of it? Who would deliver him from that species of prison, and was he going to remain there all the afternoon and night, like a portmanteau that had been forgotten at the lost luggage office? He could not manage to force the lock, and did not venture to knock hard against the sides of the confessional, for fear of attracting the attention of some beadle or sacristan. Oh! those wretched girls, and how people would make fun of him and write verses about him, and point their fingers at him, if the joke were discovered and got noised abroad!

By and by, he heard the faint sound of prayers in the distance and through the green serge curtain that concealed him Monsieur Champdelin heard the rattle of the beads on the chaplets, as the women repeated their *Ave Maria's,* and the rustle of dresses and the noise of footsteps on the pavement.

Suddenly, he felt a tickling in his throat that nearly choked him, and he could not altogether prevent himself from coughing, and when at last it passed off, the unfortunate man was horrified at hearing some one come into the chapel and up to the confessional. Whoever it

was, knelt down, and gave a discreet knock at the grating which separated the priest from his penitents, so he quickly put on the surplice and stole which were hanging on a nail, and covering his face with his handkerchief, and sitting back in the shade, he opened the grating.

It was a woman, who was already saying her prayers and he gave the responses as well as he could, from his boyish recollections, and was somewhat agitated by the delicious scent that emanated from her half-raised veil and from her bodice; but at her first words he started so, that he almost fainted. He had recognized his wife's voice, and it felt to him as if his seat were studded with sharp nails, that the sides of the confessional were closing in on him, and as if the air were growing rarified.

He now collected himself, however, and regaining his self-possession, he listened to what she had to say with increasing curiosity, and with some uncertain, and necessary interruptions. The young woman sighed, was evidently keeping back something, spoke about her unhappiness, her melancholy life, her husband's neglect, the temptations by which she was surrounded, and which she found it so difficult to resist; her conscience seemed to be burdened by an intolerable weight, though she hesitated to accuse herself directly. And in a low voice, with unctuous and coaxing tones, and mastering himself, Champdelin said:

"Courage, my child; tell me everything; the divine mercy is infinite; tell me all, without hesitation."

Then, all at once, she told him everything that was troubling her; how passion and desire had thrown her into the arms of one of her husband's best friends, the exquisite happiness that they felt when they met every

day, his delightful tenderness, which she could no longer resist, the sin which was her joy, her only object, her consolation, her dream. She grew excited, sobbed, seemed enervated and worn out, as if she were still burning from her lover's kisses, hardly seemed to know what she was saying, and begged for temporary absolution from her sins; but then Champdelin, in his exasperation, and unable to restrain himself any longer, interrupted her in a furious voice:

"Oh! no! Oh! no; this is not at all funny . . . keep such sort of things to yourself, my dear!"

. . . . . .

Poor little Madame de Champdelin nearly went out of her mind with fright and astonishment, and they are now waiting for the decree which will break their chains and let them part.

WAS IT A DREAM?

"I HAD loved her madly! Why does one love? Why does one love? How queer it is to see only one being in the world, to have only one thought in one's mind, only one desire in the heart, and only one name on the lips; a name which comes up continually, which rises like the water in a spring, from the depths of the soul, which rises to the lips, and which one repeats over and over again which one whispers ceaselessly, everywhere, like a prayer.

"I am going to tell you our story, for love only has one, which is always the same. I met her and loved her; that is all. And for a whole year I have lived on her tenderness, on her caresses, in her arms, in her dresses, on her words, so completely wrapped up, bound, imprisoned in everything which came from her, that I no longer knew whether it was day or night, if I was dead or alive, on this old earth of ours, or elsewhere.

"And then she died. How? I do not know. I no longer know; but one evening she came home wet, for it was raining heavily, and the next day she coughed, and she coughed for about a week, and took to her bed. What happened I do not remember now, but doctors came, wrote and went away. Medicines were brought, and some women made her drink them. Her hands were hot, her forehead was burning, and her eyes bright and sad. When I spoke to her, she answered me, but I do not remember what we said. I

have forgotten everything, everything, everything! She died, and I very well remember her slight, feeble sigh. The nurse said: 'Ah! and I understood, I understood!'

"I knew nothing more, nothing. I saw a priest, who said: 'Your mistress?' and it seemed to me as if he were insulting her. As she was dead, nobody had the right to know that any longer, and I turned him out. Another came who was very kind and tender, and I shed tears when he spoke to me about her.

"They consulted me about the funeral, but I do not remember anything that they said, though I recollected the coffin, and the sound of the hammer when they nailed her down in it. Oh! God, God!

"She was buried! Buried! She! In that hole! Some people came — female friends. I made my escape, and ran away; I ran, and then I walked through the streets, and went home, and the next day I started on a journey.

. . . . . .

"YESTERDAY I returned to Paris, and when I saw my room again — our room, our bed, our furniture, everything that remains of the life of a human being after death, I was seized by such a violent attack of fresh grief, that I was very near opening the window and throwing myself out into the street. As I could not remain any longer among these things, between these walls which had enclosed and sheltered her, and which retained a thousand atoms of her, of her skin and of her breath in their imperceptible crevices, I took up my hat to make my escape, and just as I reached the door, I passed the large glass in the hall, which she had put there so that she might be able to look at herself every day from head to foot as she went out, to see if her

toilet looked well, and was correct and pretty, from her little boots to her bonnet.

"And I stopped short in front of that looking-glass in which she had so often been reflected. So often, so often, that it also must have retained her reflection. I was standing there, trembling, with my eyes fixed on the glass — on that flat, profound, empty glass — which had contained her entirely, and had possessed her as much as I had, as my passionate looks had. I felt as if I loved that glass. I touched it, it was cold. Oh! the recollection! sorrowful mirror, burning mirror, horrible mirror, which makes us suffer such torments! Happy are the men whose hearts forget everything that it has contained, everything that has passed before it, everything that has looked at itself in it, that has been reflected in its affection, in its love! How I suffer!

"I went on without knowing it, without wishing it; I went towards the cemetery. I found her simple grave, a white marble cross, with these few words:

"'*She loved, was loved, and died.*'

"She is there, below, decayed! How horrible! I sobbed with my forehead on the ground, and I stopped there for a long time, a long time. Then I saw that it was getting dark, and a strange, a mad wish, the wish of a despairing lover seized me. I wished to pass the night, the last night in weeping on her grave. But I should be seen and driven out. How was I to manage? I was cunning, and got up, and began to roam about in that city of the dead. I walked and walked. How small this city is, in comparison with the other, the city in which we live: And yet, how much more numerous the dead are than the living.

We want high houses, wide streets, and much room for the four generations who see the daylight at the same time, drink water from the spring, and wine from the vines, and eat the bread from the plains.

"And for all the generations of the dead, for all that ladder of humanity that has descended down to us, there is scarcely anything afield, scarcely anything! The earth takes them back, oblivion effaces them. Adieu!

"At the end of the abandoned cemetery, I suddenly perceived that the one where those who have been dead a long time finish mingling with the soil, where the crosses themselves decay, where the last comers will be put to-morrow. It is full of untended roses, of strong and dark cypress trees, a sad and beautiful garden, nourished on human flesh.

"I was alone, perfectly alone, and so I crouched in a green tree, and hid myself there completely among the thick and somber branches, and I waited, clinging to the stem, like a shipwrecked man does to a plank.

"When it was quite dark, I left my refuge and began to walk softly, slowly, inaudibly, through that ground full of dead people, and I wandered about for a long time, but could not find her again. I went on with extended arms, knocking against the tombs with my hands, my feet, my knees, my chest, even with my head, without being able to find her. I touched and felt about like a blind man groping his way, I felt the stones, the crosses, the iron railings, the metal wreaths, and the wreaths of faded flowers! I read the names with my fingers, by passing them over the letters. What a night! What a night! I could not find her again!

"There was no moon. What a night! I am frightened, horribly frightened in these narrow paths, between two rows of graves. Graves! graves! graves! nothing but graves! On my right, on my left, in front of me, around me, everywhere there were graves! I sat down on one of them, for I could not walk any longer, my knees were so weak. I could hear my heart beat! And I could hear something else as well. What? A confused, nameless noise. Was the noise in my head in the impenetrable night, or beneath the mysterious earth, the earth sown with human corpses? I looked all around me, but I cannot say how long I remained there; I was paralyzed with terror, drunk with fright, ready to shout out, ready to die.

"Suddenly, it seemed to me as if the slab of marble on which I was sitting, was moving. Certainly, it was moving, as if it were being raised. With a bound, I sprang on to the neighboring tomb, and I saw, yes, I distinctly saw the stone which I had just quitted, rise upright, and the dead person appeared, a naked skeleton, which was pushing the stone back with its bent back. I saw it quite clearly, although the night was so dark. On the cross I could read:

"'*Here lies Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He loved his family, was kind and honorable, and died in the grace of the Lord.*'

"The dead man also read what was inscribed on his tombstone; then he picked up a stone off the path, a little, pointed stone, and began to scrape the letters carefully. He slowly effaced them altogether, and with the hollows of his eyes he looked at the places where they had been engraved, and, with the tip of the bone, that had been his forefinger, he wrote in

luminous letters, like those lines which one traces on walls with the tip of a lucifer match:

"'*Here reposes Jacques Olivant, who died at the age of fifty-one. He hastened his father's death by his unkindness, as he wished to inherit his fortune, he tortured his wife, tormented his children, deceived his neighbors, robbed everyone he could, and died wretched.*'

"When he had finished writing, the dead man stood motionless, looking at his work, and on turning round I saw that all the graves were open, that all the dead bodies had emerged from them, and that all had effaced the lies inscribed on the gravestones by their relations, and had substituted the truth instead. And I saw that all had been tormentors of their neighbors — malicious, dishonest, hypocrites, liars, rogues, calumniators, envious; that they had stolen, deceived, performed every disgraceful, every abominable action, these good fathers, these faithful wives, these devoted sons, these chaste daughters, these honest tradesmen, these men and women who were called irreproachable, and they were called irreproachable, and they were all writing at the same time, on the threshold of their eternal abode, the truth, the terrible and the holy truth which everybody is ignorant of, or pretends to be ignorant of, while the others are alive.

"I thought that *she* also must have written something on her tombstone, and now, running without any fear among the half-open coffins, among the corpses and skeletons, I went towards her, sure that I should find her immediately. I recognized her at once, without seeing her face, which was covered by the winding-sheet, and on the marble cross, where shortly before

I had read: *'She loved, was loved, and died,'* I now saw: *'Having gone out one day, in order to deceive her lover, she caught cold in the rain and died.'*

. . . . . .

"It appears that they found me at daybreak, lying on the grave unconscious."

THE LAST STEP

MONSIEUR de Saint-Juéry would not have deceived his old mistress for anything in the world: perhaps from an instinctive fear that he had heard of adventures that turn out badly, make a noise, and bring about hateful family quarrels, crises from which one emerges enervated and exasperated with destiny, and, as it were, with the weight of a bullet on one's feet, and also from his requirement for a calm, sheep-like existence, whose monotony was never disturbed by any shock, and perhaps from the remains of the love which had so entirely made him, during the first years of their connection, the slave of the proud, dominating beauty, and of the enthralling charm of that woman.

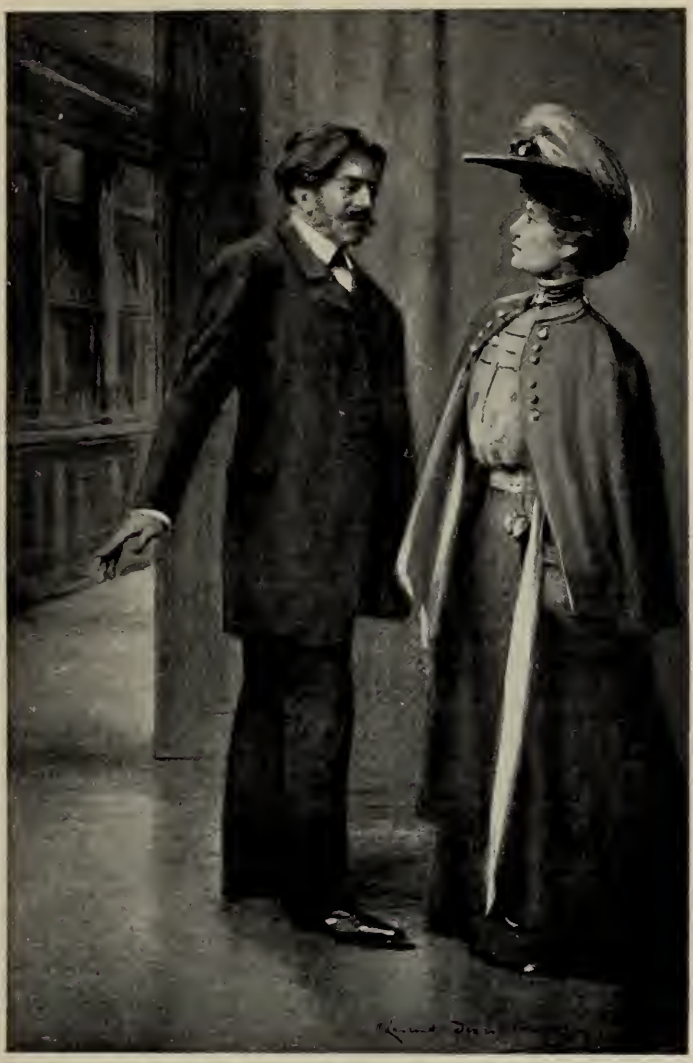
He kept out of the way of temptation almost timidly, and was faithful to her, and as submissive as a spaniel. He paid her every attention, did not appear to notice that the outlines of her figure, which had formerly been so harmonious and supple, were getting too full and puffy, that her face, which used to remind him of a blush rose, was getting wrinkled, and that her eyes were getting dull. He admired her in spite of everything, almost blindly, and clothed her with imaginary charms, with an autumnal beauty, with the majestic and serene softness of an October twilight, and with the last blossoms which unfold by the side of the walks, strewn with dead leaves.

But although their connection had lasted for many

years, though they were as closely bound to each other as if they had been married, and although Charlotte Guindal pestered him with entreaties, and upset him with continual quarrels on the subject, and, in spite of the fact that he believed her to be absolutely faithful to him, and worthy of his most perfect confidence and love, yet Monsieur de Saint-Juéry had never been able to make up his mind to give her his name, and to put their false position on a legal footing.

He really suffered from this, but remained firm and defended his position, quibbled, sought for subterfuges, replied by the eternal and vague: "What would be the good of it," which nearly sent Charlotte mad, made her furious and caused her to say angry and ill-tempered things. But he remained passive and listless, with his back bent like a restive horse under the whip.

He asked her whether it was really necessary to their happiness, as they had no children? Did not everybody think that they were married? Was not she everywhere called Madame de Saint-Juéry, and had their servants any doubt that they were in the service of respectable, married people? Was not the name which had been transmitted to a man from father to son, intact, honored, and often with a halo of glory round it, a sacred trust which no one had a right to touch? What would she gain if she bore it legitimately? Did she for a moment suppose that she would rise higher in people's estimation, and be more admitted into society, or that people would forget that she had been his regular mistress before becoming his wife? Did not everybody know that formerly, before he rescued her from that Bohemian life in which she had been waiting for her chance in vain, and was losing her



"What would be the good of it?"

good looks, Charlotte Guindal frequented all the public balls, and showed her legs liberally at the *Moulin-Rouge*.[1]

Charlotte knew his crabbed, though also kindly character, which was at the same time logical and obstinate, too well to hope that she would ever be able to overcome his opposition and scruples, except by some clever woman's trick, some well-acted scene in a comedy; so she appeared to be satisfied with his reasons, and to renounce her bauble, and outwardly she showed an equable and conciliatory temper, and no longer worried Monsieur de Saint-Juéry with her recriminations, and thus the time went by, in calm monotony, without fruitless battles or fierce assaults.

Charlotte Guindal's medical man was Doctor Rabatel, one of those clever men who appear to know everything, but whom a country bone-setter would reduce to a "why?" by a few questions; one of those men who wish to impress everybody with their apparent value, and who make use of their medical knowledge as if it were some productive commercial house, which carried on a suspicious business; who can scent out those persons whom they can manage as they please, as if they were a piece of soft wax, who keep them in a continual state of terror, by keeping the idea of death constantly before their eyes.

They soon manage to obtain the mastery over such persons, scrutinize their consciences as well as the cleverest priest could do, make sure of being well paid for their complicity as soon as they have obtained a footing anywhere, and drain their patients of their secrets, in order to use them as a weapon for extorting

[1] A café chantant, and casino.

money on occasions. He felt sure immediately that this middle-aged lady wanted something of him, as by some extraordinary perversion of taste, he was rather fond of the remains of a good-looking woman, if they were well got up, and offered to him; of that high flavor which arises from soft lips, which had been made tender through years of love, from gray hair powdered with gold, from a body engaged in its last struggle, and which dreams of one more victory before abdicating power altogether, he did not hesitate to become his new patient's lover.

When winter came, however, a thorough change took place in Charlotte's health, that had hitherto been so good. She had no strength left, she felt ill after the slightest exertion, complained of internal pains, and spent whole days lying on the couch, with set eyes and without uttering a word, so that everybody thought that she was dying of one of those mysterious maladies which cannot be coped with, but which, by degrees, undermines the whole system. It was sad to see her rapidly sinking, lying motionless on her pillows, while a mist seemed to have come over her eyes, and her hands lay helplessly on the bed and her mouth seemed sealed by some invisible finger. Monsieur de Saint-Juéry was in despair; he cried like a child, and he suffered as if somebody had plunged a knife into him, when the doctor said to him in his unctuous voice:

"I know that you are a brave man, my dear sir, and I may venture to tell you the whole truth. . . . Madame de Saint-Juéry is doomed, irrevocably doomed. . . . Nothing but a miracle can save her, and alas! there are no miracles in these days. The end is only

a question of a few hours, and may come quite suddenly. . . .

Monsieur de Saint-Juéry had thrown himself into a chair, and was sobbing bitterly, covering his face with his hands.

"My poor dear, my poor darling," he said, through his tears.

"Pray compose yourself, and be brave," the doctor continued, sitting down by his side, "for I have to say something serious to you, and to convey to you our poor patient's last wishes. . . . A few minutes ago, she told me the secret of your double life, and of your connection with her. . . . And now, in view of death, which she feels approaching so rapidly, for she is under no delusion, the unhappy woman wishes to die at peace with heaven, with the consolation of having regulated her equivocal position, and of having become your wife."

Monsieur de Saint-Juéry sat upright, with a bewildered look, while he moved his hands nervously; in his grief he was incapable of manifesting any will of his own, or of opposing this unexpected attack.

"Oh! anything that Charlotte wishes, doctor; anything, and I will myself go and tell her so, on my knees!"

. . . . . .

The wedding took place discreetly, with something funereal about it, in the darkened room, where the words which were spoken had a strange sound, almost of anguish. Charlotte, who was lying in bed, with her eyes dilated through happiness, had put both trembling hands into those of Monsieur de Saint-Juéry,

and she seemed to expire with the word: "Yes" on her lips. The doctor looked at the moving scene, grave and impassive, with his chin buried in his white cravat, and his two arms resting on the mantel-piece, while his eyes twinkled behind his glasses. . . .

The next week, Madame de Saint-Juéry began to get better, and that wonderful recovery about which Monsieur de Saint-Juéry tells everybody with effusive gratitude, who will listen to him, has so increased Doctor Rabatel's reputation, that at the next election he will be made a member of the Academy of Medicine.

THE WILL

I KNEW that tall young fellow, René de Bourneval. He was an agreeable man, though of a rather melancholy turn of mind, who seemed prejudiced against everything, very skeptical, and able to tear worldly hypocrisies to pieces. He often used to say:

"There are no honorable men, or at any rate, they only appear so when compared to low people."

He had two brothers, whom he never saw, the Messieurs de Courcils, and I thought they were by another father, on account of the difference in the name. I had frequently heard that something strange had happened in the family, but I did not know the details.

As I took a great liking to him, we soon became intimate, and one evening, when I had been dining with him alone, I asked him by chance: "Are you by your mother's first or second marriage?" He grew rather pale, and then flushed, and did not speak for a few moments; he was visibly embarrassed. Then he smiled in a melancholy and gentle manner, which was peculiar to him, and said:

"My dear friend, if it will not weary you, I can give you some very strange particulars about my life. I know that you are a sensible man, so I do not fear that our friendship will suffer by my revelations, and should it suffer, I should not care about having you for my friend any longer.

"My mother, Madame de Courcils, was a poor little

timid woman, whom her husband had married for the sake of her fortune, and her whole life was one of martyrdom. Of a loving, delicate mind, she was constantly being ill-treated by the man who ought to have been my father, one of those bores called country gentleman. A month after their marriage he was living with a servant, and besides that, the wives and daughters of his tenants were his mistresses, which did not prevent him from having three children by his wife, or three, if you count me in. My mother said nothing, and lived in that noisy house like a little mouse. Set aside, disparaged, nervous, she looked at people with her bright, uneasy, restless eyes, the eyes of some terrified creature which can never shake off its fear. And yet she was pretty, very pretty and fair, a gray-blonde, as if her hair had lost its color through her constant fears.

"Among Monsieur de Courcil's friends who constantly came to the *château,* there was an ex-cavalry officer, a widower, a man who was feared, who was at the same time tender and violent, capable of the most energetic resolutions, Monsieur de Bourneval, whose name I bear. He was a tall, thin man, with a heavy black moustache, and I am very like him. He was a man who had read a great deal, and whose ideas were not like those of most of his class. His great-grandmother had been a friend of J. J. Rousseau's, and one might have said that he had inherited something of this ancestral connection. He knew the *Contrat Social,* and the *Nouvelle Héloïse* by heart, and all those philosophical books which long beforehand prepared the overthrow of our old usages, prejudices, superannuated laws and imbecile morality.

" It seems that he loved my mother, and she loved him, but their intrigue was carried on so secretly, that no one guessed it. The poor, neglected, unhappy woman, must have clung to him in a despairing manner, and in her intimacy with him must have imbibed all his ways of thinking, theories of free thought, audacious ideas of independent love; but as she was so timid that she never ventured to speak aloud, it was all driven back, condensed and expressed in her heart, which never opened itself.

" My two brothers were very hard towards her, like their father was, and never gave her a caress, and, used to seeing her count for nothing in the house, they treated her rather like a servant, and so I was the only one of her sons who really loved her, and whom she loved.

" When she died, I was seventeen, and I must add, in order that you may understand what follows, that there had been a law suit between my father and my mother, and that their property had been separated, to my mother's advantage, as, thanks to the tricks of the law, and the intelligent devotion of a lawyer to her interests, she had preserved the right of making her will in favor of anyone she pleased.

" We were told that there was a will lying at the lawyer's, and were invited to be present at the reading of it. I can remember it, as if it were yesterday. It was a grand, dramatic, burlesque, surprising scene, brought about by the posthumous revolt of that dead woman, by that cry for liberty, that claim from the depths of her tomb, of that martyred woman who had been crushed by our habits during her life, and, who,

from her closed tomb, uttered a despairing appeal for independence.

"The man who thought that he was my father, a stout, ruddy-faced man, who gave everyone the idea of a butcher, and my brothers, two great fellows of twenty and twenty-two, were waiting quietly in their chairs. Monsieur de Bourneval, who had been invited to be present, came in and stood behind me. He was very pale, and bit his moustache, which was turning gray. No doubt he was prepared for what was going to happen, and the lawyer double-locked the door and began to read the will, after having opened the envelope, which was sealed with red wax, and whose contents he was ignorant of, in our presence."

My friend stopped suddenly and got up, and from his writing-table he took an old paper, unfolded it, kissed it, and then continued: "This is the will of my beloved mother:

"'I, the undersigned, Anne Catherine-Genevieve-Mathilde de Croixlure, the legitimate wife of Leopold-Joseph Goutran de Courcils, sound in body and mind, here express my last wishes.

"'I first of all ask God, and then my dear son René, to pardon me for the act I am about to commit. I believe that my child's heart is great enough to understand me, and to forgive me. I have suffered my whole life long. I was married out of calculation, then despised, misunderstood, oppressed and constantly deceived by my husband.

"'I forgive him, but I owe him nothing.

"'My eldest sons never loved me, never spoilt me, scarcely treated me as a mother, but during my whole

life I was everything that I ought to have been, and I owe them nothing more after my death. The ties of blood cannot exist without daily and constant affection. An ungrateful son is less than a stranger; he is a culprit, for he has no right to be indifferent towards his mother.

"'I have always trembled before men, before their unjust laws, their inhuman customs, their shameful prejudices. Before God, I have no longer any fear. Dead, I fling aside disgraceful hypocrisy; I dare to speak my thoughts, and to avow and to sign the secret of my heart.

"'I therefore leave that part of my fortune of which the law allows me to dispose, as a deposit with my dear lover Pierre-Gennes-Simon de Bourneval, to revert afterwards to our dear son, René.

"'(This wish is, moreover, formulated more precisely in a notorial deed).

"'And I declare before the Supreme Judge who hears me, that I should have cursed heaven and my own existence, if I had not met my lover's deep, devoted, tender, unshaken affection, if I had not felt in his arms that the Creator made His creatures to love, sustain and console each other, and to weep together in the hours of sadness.

"'Monsieur de Courcils is the father of my two eldest sons; René alone owes his life to Monsieur de Bourneval. I pray to the Master of men and of their destinies, to place father and son above social prejudices, to make them love each other until they die, and to love me also in my coffin.

"'These are my last thoughts, and my last wish.

"'MATHILDE DE CROIXLUCE.'"

"'Monsieur de Courcils had arisen and he cried:

"'It is the will of a mad woman.'

"Then Monsieur de Bourneval stepped forward and said in a loud and penetrating voice: 'I, Simon de Bourneval, solemnly declare that this writing contains nothing but the strict truth, and I am ready to prove it by letters which I possess.'

"On hearing that, Monsieur de Courcils went up to him, and I thought they were going to collar each other. There they stood, both of them tall, one stout and the other thin, both trembling. My mother's husband stammered out: 'You are a worthless wretch!' And the other replied in a loud, dry voice: 'We will meet somewhere else, monsieur. I should have already slapped your ugly face, and challenged you a long time ago, if I had not, before everything else, thought of the peace of mind of that poor woman whom you made suffer so much during her lifetime.'

"Then, turning to me, he said: 'You are my son; will you come with me? I have no right to take you away, but I shall assume it, if you will kindly come with me.' I shook his hand without replying, and we went out together; I was certainly three parts mad.

"Two days later Monsieur de Bourneval killed Monsieur de Courcils in a duel. My brothers, fearing some terrible scandal, held their tongues, and I offered them, and they accepted, half the fortune which my mother had left me. I took my real father's name, renouncing that which the law gave me, but which was not really mine. Monsieur de Bourneval died three years afterwards, and I have not consoled myself yet."

He rose from his chair, walked up and down the room, and, standing in front of me, he said:

"Well, I say that my mother's will was one of the most beautiful and loyal, as well as one of the grandest acts that a woman could perform. Do you not think so?"

I gave him both my hands:

"Most certainly I do, my friend."

A COUNTRY EXCURSION

FOR five months they had been talking of going to lunch at some country restaurant in the neighborhood of Paris, on Madame Dufour's birthday, and as they were looking forward very impatiently to the outing, they had got up very early that morning. Monsieur Dufour had borrowed the milkman's tilted cart, and drove himself. It was a very tidy, two-wheeled conveyance, with a hood, and in it the wife, resplendent in a wonderful, sherry-colored, silk dress, sat by the side of her husband.

The old grandmother and a girl were accommodated with two chairs, and a boy with yellow hair was lying at the bottom of the trap, of whom however, nothing was to be seen except his head.

When they got to the bridge of Neuilly, Monsieur Dufour said: "Here we are in the country at last!" and at that signal, his wife had grown sentimental about the beauties of nature. When they got to the cross roads at Courbevoie, they were seized with admiration for the distant horizon down there; on the right, was the spire of Argenteuil church, and above it rose the hills of Sannois, and the mill of Orgemont, while on the left, the aqueduct of Marly stood out against the clear morning sky, and in the distance they could see the terrace of Saint-Germain; and opposite to them, at the end of a low chain of hills, the new fort of Cormeilles. Quite in the distance, a very long

way off, beyond the plains and villages, one could see the somber green of the forests.

The sun was beginning to shine in their faces, the dust got into their eyes, and on either side of the road there stretched an interminable tract of bare, ugly country which smelt unpleasantly. One might have thought that it had been ravaged by the pestilence, which had even attacked the buildings, for skeletons of dilapidated and deserted houses, or small cottages, which were left in an unfinished state, as the contractors had not been paid, reared their four roofless walls on each side.

Here and there tall factory chimneys rose up from the barren soil; the only vegetation on that putrid land, where the spring breezes wafted an odor of petroleum and shist, which was mingled with another smell, that was even still less agreeable. At last, however, they crossed the Seine a second time, and it was delightful on the bridge. The river sparkled in the sun, and they had a feeling of quiet satisfaction and enjoyment, in drinking in the purer air, that was not impregnated by the black smoke of factories, nor by the miasma from the deposits of night soil. A man whom they met, told them that the name of the place was *Bézons,* and so Monsieur Dufour pulled up, and read the attractive announcement outside an eating-house: *Restaurant Poulin, stews and fried fish, private rooms, arbors and swings.*

"Well! Madame Dufour, will this suit you? Will you make up your mind at last?"

She read the announcement in her turn, and then looked at the house for a time.

It was a white, country inn, built by the road side,

and through the open door she could see the bright zinc of the counter, at which two workmen, out for the day, were sitting. At last she made up her mind, and said:

"Yes, this will do; and, besides, there is a view."

So they drove into a large yard with trees in it, behind the inn, which was only separated from the river by the towing-path, and got out. The husband sprang out first, and then held out his arms for his wife, and as the step was very high, Madame Dufour, in order to reach him, had to show the lower part of her limbs, whose former slenderness had disappeared in fat, the Monsieur Dufour, who was already getting excited by the country air, pinched her calf, and then taking her in his arms, he set her onto the ground, as if she had been some enormous bundle. She shook the dust out of the silk dress, and then looked round, to see in what sort of a place she was.

She was a stout woman, of about thirty-six, full-blown and delightful to look at. She could hardly breathe, as her stays were laced too tightly, and their pressure forced the heaving mass of her superabundant bosom up to her double chin. Next, the girl put her hand onto her father's shoulder, and jumped lightly out. The boy with the yellow hair had got down by stepping on the wheel, and he helped Monsieur Dufour to get his grandmother out. Then they unharnessed the horse, which they tied up to a tree, and the carriage fell back, with both shafts in the air. The men took off their coats, and washed their hands in a pail of water, and then went and joined their ladies who had already taken possession of the swings.

Mademoiselle Dufour was trying to swing herself

standing up, but she could not succeed in getting a start. She was a pretty girl of about eighteen; one of those women who suddenly excite your desire when you meet them in the street, and who leave you with a vague feeling of uneasiness, and of excited senses. She was tall, had a small waist and large hips, with a dark skin, very large eyes, and very black hair. Her dress clearly marked the outlines of her firm, full figure, which was accentuated by the motion of her hips as she tried to swing herself higher. Her arms were stretched over her head to hold the rope, so that her bosom rose at every movement she made. Her hat, which a gust of wind had blown off, was hanging behind her, and as the swing gradually rose higher and higher, she showed her delicate limbs up to the knees each time, and the wind from the petticoats, which was more heady than the fumes of wine, blew into the faces of the two men, who were looking at her and smiling.

Sitting in the other swing, Madame Dufour kept saying in a monotonous voice:

"Cyprian, come and swing me; do come and swing me, Cyprian!"

At last he went, and turning up his shirt sleeves as if he intended to work very hard, he, with much difficulty set his wife in motion. She clutched the two ropes, and held her legs out straight, so as not to touch the ground. She enjoyed feeling giddy at the motion of the swing, and her whole figure shook like a jelly on a dish, but as she went higher and higher, she grew too giddy and got frightened. Every time she was coming back she uttered a piercing scream which made all the little urchins come round, and, down below, beneath the garden

hedge, she vaguely saw a row of mischievous heads, who made various grimaces as they laughed.

When a servant girl came out, they ordered lunch.

"Some fried fish, a stewed rabbit, salad, and dessert," Madame Dufour said, with an important air.

"Bring two quarts of beer and a bottle of claret," her husband said.

"We will have lunch on the grass," the girl added.

The grandmother, who had an affection for cats, had been running after one that belonged to the house, and had been bestowing the most affectionate words on it, for the last ten minutes. The animal, which was no doubt secretly flattered by her attentions, kept close to the good woman, but just out of reach of her hand, and quietly walked round the trees, against which she rubbed herself, with her tail up, and purring with pleasure.

"Hulloh!" the young man with the yellow hair, who was ferreting about, suddenly exclaimed, "here are two swell boats!" They all went to look at them, and saw two beautiful skiffs in a wooden boat-house, which were as beautifully finished as if they had been objects of luxury. They were moored side by side, like two tall, slender girls, in their narrow shining length, and excited the wish to float in them on warm summer mornings and evenings, along the bower-covered banks of the river, where the trees dipped their branches into the water, where the rushes are continually rustling in the breeze, and where the swift king-fishers dart about like flashes of blue lightning.

The whole family looked at them with great respect.

"Oh! They are indeed two swell boats," Monsieur

Dufour repeated gravely, and he examined them gravely, and he examined them like a connoisseur. He had been in the habit of rowing in his younger days, he said, and when he had that in his hands — and he went through the action of pulling the oars — he did not care a fig for anybody. He had beaten more than one Englishman formerly at the Joinville regattas. He grew quite excited at last, and offered to make a bet, that in a boat like that, he could row six leagues an hour, without exerting himself."

"Lunch is ready," the waitress said, appearing at the entrance to the boat-house, so they all hurried off, but two young men were already lunching at the best place, which Madame Dufour had chosen in her mind as her seat. No doubt they were the owners of the skiffs, for they were dressed in boating costume. They were stretched out, almost lying on chairs, and were sunburnt, and had on flannel trousers and thin cotton jerseys, with short sleeves, which showed their bare arms, which were as strong as blacksmiths'. They were two strong fellows, who thought a great deal of their vigor, and who showed in all their movements that elasticity and grace of the limbs which can only be acquired by exercise, and which is so different to the deformity with which the same continual work stamps the mechanic.

They exchanged a rapid smile when they saw the mother, and then a look on seeing the daughter.

"Let us give up our place," one of them said: "it will make us acquainted with them."

The other got up immediately, and holding his black and red boating-cap in his hand, he politely offered the ladies the only shady place in the garden. With many

excuses they accepted, and so that it might be more rural, they sat on the grass, without either tables or chairs.

The two young men took their plates, knives, forks, etc., to a table a little way off, and began to eat again, and their bare arms, which they showed continually, rather embarrassed the girl. She even pretended to turn her head aside, and not to see them, while Madame Dufour, who was rather bolder, tempted by feminine curiosity, looked at them every moment, and no doubt compared them with the secret unsightliness of her husband. She had squatted herself on the ground, with her legs tucked under her, after the manner of tailors, and she kept wriggling about continually under the pretext that ants were crawling about her somewhere. Monsieur Dufour, whom the presence of strangers of politeness had put into rather a bad temper, was trying to find a comfortable position, which he did not, however, succeed in doing, and the young man with the yellow hair was eating as silently as an ogre.

"It is lovely weather, Monsieur," the stout lady said to one of the boating-men. She wished to be friendly, because they had given up their place.

"It is, indeed, Madame," he replied; "do you often go into the country?"

"Oh! Only once or twice a year, to get a little fresh air; and you, monsieur?"

"I come and sleep here every night."

"Oh! That must be very nice?"

"Certainly it is, Madame." And he gave them such a practical account of his daily life, that it gave rise in the hearts of these shop-keepers, who were deprived of the meadows, and who longed for country walks, to that

foolish love of nature, which they all feel so strongly the whole year round, behind the counter in their shop.

The girl raised her eyes, and looked at the oarsman with emotion, and Monsieur Dufour spoke for the first time.

"It is indeed a happy life," he said. And then he added: "A little more rabbit, my dear?"

"No, thank you," she replied and turning to the young men again, and pointing to their arms asked: "Do you never feel cold like that?"

They both began to laugh, and they frightened the family by the account of the enormous fatigue they could endure, of their bathing while in a state of tremendous perspiration, of their rowing in the fog at night, and they struck their chests violently, to show how they sounded.

"Ah! You look very strong," the husband said, who did not talk any more of the time when he used to beat the English. The girl was looking at them aside now, and the young fellow with the yellow hair was coughing violently, as he had swallowed some wine the wrong way, and bespattering Madame Dufour's cherry-colored silk dress, who got angry, and sent for some water, to wash the spots.

Meanwhile it had grown unbearably hot, the sparkling river looked like a blaze of fire, and the fumes of the wine were getting into their heads. Monsieur Dufour, who had a violent hiccough, had unbuttoned his waistcoat, and the top of his trousers, while his wife, who felt choking, was gradually unfastening her dress. The apprentice was shaking his yellow wig in a happy frame of mind, and kept helping himself to wine, and as the old grandmother felt drunk, she also felt very

stiff and dignified. As for the girl, she showed nothing, except a peculiar brightness in her eyes, while the brown skin on the cheeks became more rosy.

The coffee finished them off; they spoke of singing, and each of them sang, or repeated a couplet, which the others repeated frantically. Then they got up with some difficulty, and while the two women, who were rather dizzy, were getting the fresh air, the two men, who were altogether drunk, were performing gymnastic tricks. Heavy, limp, and with scarlet faces, they hung awkwardly onto the iron rings, without being able to raise themselves, while their shirts were continually threatening to leave their trousers, and to flap in the wind like flags.

Meanwhile, the two boating-men had got their skiffs into the water, and they came back, and politely asked the ladies whether they would like a row.

"Would you like one, Monsieur Dufour?" his wife exclaimed,—"Please come!"

He merely gave her a drunken look, without understanding what she said. Then one of the rowers came up, with two fishing-rods in his hand; and the hope of catching a gudgeon, that great aim of the Parisian shopkeeper, made Dufour's dull eyes gleam, and he politely allowed them to do whatever they liked, while he sat in the shade, under the bridge, with his feet dangling over the river, by the side of the young man with the yellow hair, who was sleeping soundly close to him.

One of the boating men made a martyr of himself and took the mother.

"Let us go to the little wood on the *Ile aux Anglias!*" he called out, as he rowed off. The other skiff went slower, for the rower was looking at his com-

panion so intently, that he thought of nothing else, and his emotion paralyzed his strength, while the girl, who was sitting on the steerer's seat, gave herself up to the enjoyment of being on the water. She felt disinclined to think, felt a lassitude in her limbs, and a total abandonment of herself, as if she were intoxicated, and she had become very flushed, and breathed shortly. The effects of the wine, which were increased by the extreme heat, made all the trees on the bank seem to bow, as she passed. A vague wish for enjoyment and a fermentation for her blood, seemed to pervade her whole body, which was excited by the heat of the day; and she was also agitated by this *tête-à-tête* on the water, in a place which seemed depopulated by the heat, with this young man who thought her pretty, whose looks seemed to caress her skin, and whose looks were as penetrating and pervading as the sun's rays.

Their inability to speak, increased their emotion, and they looked about them, but at last he made an effort and asked her name.

"Henriette," she said.

"Why! My name is Henri," he replied. The sound of their voices had calmed them, and they looked at the banks. The other skiff had passed them, and seemed to be waiting for them, and the rower called out:

"We will meet you in the wood; we are going as far as *Robinson's* [1] because Madame Dufour is thirsty." Then he bent over his oars again, and rowed off so quickly that he was soon out of sight.

Meanwhile, a continual roar, which they had heard

[1] A well-known restaurant on the banks of the Seine, which is much frequented by the middle classes.— TRANSLATOR.

for some time, came nearer, and the river itself seemed to shiver, as if the dull noise were rising from its depths.

"What is that noise?" she asked. It was the noise of the weir, which cut the river in two, at the island, and he was explaining it to her, when above the noise of the waterfall, they heard the song of a bird, which seemed a long way off.

"Listen!" he said; "the nightingales are singing during the day, so the females must be sitting."

A nightingale! She had never heard one before, and the idea of listening to one roused visions of poetic tenderness in her heart. A nightingale! That is to say, the invisible witness of her lovers' interview which Juliette invoked on her balcony [1]; the celestial music, which is attuned to human kisses, that eternal inspirer of all those languorous romances which open an ideal sky to all the poor little tender hearts of sensitive girls!

She was going to hear a nightingale.

"We must not make a noise," her companion said, "and then we can go into the wood, and sit down close to it."

The skiff seemed to glide. They saw the trees on the island, whose banks were so low, that they could look into the depths of the thickets. They stopped, he made the boat fast, Henriette took hold of Henri's arm, and they went beneath the trees.

"Stop," he said, so she bent down, and they went into an inextricable thicket of creepers, leaves, and reed-grass, which formed an inpenetrable asylum, and which the young man laughingly called, "his private room."

[1] Romeo and Juliet, Act III, Scene V.

Just above their heads, perched in one of the trees which hid them, the bird was still singing. He uttered shakes and roulades, and then long, vibrating sounds that filled the air, and seemed to lose themselves on the horizon, across the level country, through that burning silence which weighed upon the whole country round. They did not speak for fear of frightening it away. They were sitting close together, and slowly Henri's arm stole round the girl's waist and squeezed it gently. She took that daring hand without any anger, and kept removing it whenever he put it round her; without, however, feeling at all embarrassed by this caress, just as if it had been something quite natural, which she was resisting just as naturally.

She was listening to the bird in ecstasy. She felt an infinite longing for happiness, for some sudden demonstration of tenderness, for the revelation of superhuman poetry, and she felt such a softening at her heart, and relaxation of her nerves, that she began to cry, without knowing why, and now the young man was straining her close to him, and she did not remove his arm; she did not think of it. Suddenly the nighting le stopped, and a voice called out in the distance:

"Henriette!"

"Do not reply," he said in a low voice; "you will drive the bird away."

But she had no idea of doing so, and they remained in the same position for some time. Madame Dufour had sat down somewhere or other, for from time to time they heard the stout lady break out into little bursts of laughter.

The girl was still crying; she was filled with strange

sensations. Henri's head was on her shoulder, and suddenly he kissed her on the lips. She was surprised and angry, and, to avoid him, she stood up.

They were both very pale, when they quitted their grassy retreat. The blue sky looked dull to them, and the ardent sun was clouded over to their eyes, but they perceived not the solitude and silence. They walked quickly side by side, without speaking or touching each other, for they appeared to be irreconcilable enemies, as if disgust had sprung up between them, and hatred between their souls, and from time to time Henriette called out: "Mamma!"

By-and-bye they heard a noise in a thicket, and the stout lady appeared looking rather confused, and her companion's face was wrinkled with smiles which he could not check.

Madame Dufour took his arm, and they returned to the boats, and Henri, who was going on first, still without speaking, by the girl's side, and at last they got back to Bézons. Monsieur Dufour, who had got sober, was waiting for them very impatiently, while the young man with the yellow hair, was having a mouthful of something to eat, before leaving the inn. The carriage was in the yard, with the horse in, and the grandmother, who had already got in, was very frightened at the thought of being overtaken by night, before they got back to Paris, as the outskirts were not safe.

They shook hands, and the Dufour family drove off.

"Good-bye, until we meet again!" the oarsman cried, and the answer they got was a sigh and a tear.

. . . . . .

Two months later, as Henri was going along the *Rue des Martyrs,* he saw *Dufour, Ironmonger* over a

door, and so he went in, and saw the stout lady sitting at the counter. They recognized each other immediately, and after an interchange of polite greetings, he asked after them all.

"And how is Mademoiselle Henriette?" he inquired, specially.

"Very well, thank you; she is married."

"Ah!" . . . But mastering his feelings, he added: "Whom was she married to?"

"To that young man who went with us, you know, he has joined us in business."

"I remember him, perfectly."

He was going out, feeling very unhappy, though scarcely knowing why, when Madame called him back.

"And how is your friend?" she asked, rather shyly.

"He is very well, thank you."

"Please give him our compliments, and beg him to come and call, when he is in the neighborhood."

She then added: "Tell him it will give me great pleasure."

"I will be sure to do so. Adieu!"

"I will not say that; come again, very soon."

. . . . . .

The next year, one very hot Sunday, all the details of that adventure which he had never forgotten, suddenly came back to him so clearly, that he returned to their room in the wood, and he was overwhelmed with astonishment when he went in. She was sitting on the grass, looking very sad, while by her side, again in his shirt sleeves the young man with the yellow hair was sleeping soundly, like some brute.

She grew so pale when she saw Henri, that at first

he thought she was going to faint, then, however, they began to talk quite naturally. But when he told her that he was very fond of that spot, and went there very often on Sundays, she looked into his eyes for a long time. " I, too, think of it," she replied.

" Come, my dear," her husband said, with a yawn; " I think it is time for us to be going."

THE LANCER'S WIFE

IT was after Bourbaki's defeat in the East of France. The army, broken up, decimated and worn out, had been obliged to retreat into Switzerland, after that terrible campaign, and it was only the short time that it lasted, which saved a hundred and fifty thousand men from certain death. Hunger, the terrible cold, forced marches in the snow without boots, over bad mountainous roads, had caused us *francs-tireurs* especially the greatest sufferings, for we were without tents and almost without food, always in front when we were marching towards Belfort, and in the rear, when returning by the Jura. Of our little band that had numbered twelve hundred men on the first of January, there remained only twenty-two pale, thin, ragged wretches, when we at length succeeded in reaching Swiss territory.

There we were safe and could rest. Everybody knows what sympathy was shown to the unfortunate French army, and how well it was cared for. We all gained fresh life, and those who had been rich and happy before the war, declared that they had never experienced a greater feeling of comfort than they did then. Just think. We actually had something to eat every day, and could sleep every night.

Meanwhile, the war continued in the East of France, which had been excluded from the armistice. Besançon still kept the enemy in check, and the latter had their revenge by ravaging the *Franché Comte.* Sometimes we heard that they had approached quite close to the frontier, and we saw Swiss troops, who were to form a

line of observation between us and them, set out on their march.

That pained us in the end, and as we regained health and strength the longing for fighting laid hold of us. It was disgraceful and irritating to know that within two or three leagues of us, the Germans were victorious and insolent, to feel that we were protected by our captivity, and to feel that on that account we were powerless against them.

One day, our captain took five or six of us aside, and spoke to us about it, long and furiously. He was a fine fellow that captain. He had been a sub-lieutenant in the Zouaves, was tall and thin, and as hard as steel, and during the whole campaign he had cut out their work for the Germans. He fretted in inactivity and could not accustom himself to the idea of being a prisoner and of doing nothing.

" Confound it! " he said to us, " does it not pain you to know that there is a number of Uhlans within two hours of us? Does it not almost drive you mad to know that those beggarly wretches are walking about as masters in our mountains, where six determined men might kill a whole spitful any day? I cannot endure it any longer, and I must go there."

" But how can you manage it, Captain? "

" How? It is not very difficult! Just as if we had not done a thing or two within the last six months, and got out of woods that were guarded by very different men from the Swiss. The day that you wish to cross over into France, I will undertake to get you there."

" That may be; but what shall we do in France without any arms? "

"Without arms? We will get them over yonder, by Jove!"

"You are forgetting the treaty," another soldier said; "we shall run the risk of doing the Swiss an injury, if Manteuffel learns that they have allowed prisoners to return to France."

"Come," said the captain, "those are all bad reasons. I mean to go and kill some Prussians; that is all I care about. If you do not wish to do as I do, well and good; only say so at once. I can quite well go by myself; I do not require anybody's company."

Naturally we all protested and as it was quite impossible to make the captain alter his mind, we felt obliged to promise to go with him. We liked him too much to leave him in the lurch, as he never failed us in any extremity; and so the expedition was decided on.

II

THE Captain had a plan of his own, that he had been cogitating over for some time. A man in that part of the country, whom he knew, was going to lend him a cart, and six suits of peasants' clothes. We could hide under some straw at the bottom of the wagon, and it would be loaded with Gruyère cheese, which he was supposed to be going to sell in France. The captain told the sentinels that he was taking two friends with him, to protect his goods, in case any one should try to rob him, which did not seem an extraordinary precaution. A Swiss officer seemed to look at the wagon in a knowing manner, but that was in order to impress his soldiers. In a word, neither officers nor men could make it out.

"Get on," the captain said to the horses, as he cracked his whip, while our three men quietly smoked their pipes. I was half-suffocated in my box, which only admitted the air through those holes in front, while at the same time I was nearly frozen, for it was terribly cold.

"Get on," the captain said again, and the wagon loaded with Gruyère cheese entered France.

The Prussian lines were very badly guarded, as the enemy trusted to the watchfulness of the Swiss. The sergeant spoke North German, while our captain spoke the bad German of the *Four Cantons,* and so they could not understand each other; the sergeant, however, pretended to be very intelligent, and in order to make us believe that he understood us, they allowed us to continue our journey, and after traveling for seven hours, being continually stopped in the same manner, we arrived at a small village of the Jura, in ruins, at nightfall.

What were we going to do? Our only arms were the captain's whip, our uniforms, our peasants' blouses, and our food our Gruyère cheese. Our sole riches consisted in our ammunition, packets of cartridges which we had stowed away inside some of the huge cheeses. We had about a thousand of them, just two hundred each, but then we wanted rifles, and they must be Chassepots; luckily, however, the captain was a bold man of an inventive mind, and this was the plan that he hit upon.

While three of us remained hidden in a cellar in the abandoned village, he continued his journey as far as Besançon with the empty wagon and one man. The town was invested, but one can always make one's way into a town among the hills by crossing the table-land

till within about ten miles of the walls, and then by following paths and ravines on foot. They left their wagon at Omans, among the Germans, and escaped out of it at night on foot, so as to gain the heights which border the river Doubs; the next day they entered Besançon, where there were plenty of Chassepots. There were nearly forty thousand of them left in the arsenal, and General Roland, a brave marine, laughed at the captain's daring project, but let him have six rifles and wished him "good luck." There he had also found his wife, who had been through all the war with us before the campaign in the East, and who had been only prevented by illness from continuing with Bourbaki's army. She had recovered, however, in spite of the cold, which was growing more and more intense, and in spite of the numberless privations that awaited her, she persisted in accompanying her husband. He was obliged to give way to her, and they all three, the captain, his wife, and our comrade, started on their expedition.

Going was nothing in comparison to returning. They were obliged to travel by night, so as to avoid meeting anybody, as the possession of six rifles would have made them liable to suspicion. But in spite of everything, a week after leaving us, the captain and his *two men* were back with us again. The campaign was about to begin.

III

THE first night of his arrival, he began it himself, and, under the pretext of examining the country round, he went along the high road.

I must tell you, that the little village which served as

our fortress was a small collection of poor, badly built houses, which had been deserted long before. It lay on a steep slope, which terminated in a wooded plain. The country people sell the wood; they send it down the ravines, which are called *coulées,* locally, and which lead down to the plain, and there they stack it into piles, which they sell thrice a year to the wood merchants. The spot where this market is held, is indicated by two small houses by the side of the high road, and which serve for public-houses. The captain had gone down there by one of these *coulées.*

He had been gone about half-an-hour, and we were on the look-out at the top of the ravine when we heard a shot. The captain had ordered us not to stir, and only to come to him when we heard him blow his trumpet. It was made of a goat's horn, and could be heard a league off, but it gave no sound, and in spite of our cruel anxiety we were obliged to wait in silence, with out rifles by our side.

It is nothing to go down these *coulées;* one need only let oneself glide down, but it is more difficult to get up again; one has to scramble up by catching hold of the hanging branches of the trees, and sometimes on all fours, by sheer strength. A whole mortal hour passed and he did not come, nothing moved in the brushwood. The captain's wife began to grow impatient; what could he be doing? Why did he not call us? Did the shot that we had heard proceed from an enemy, and had he killed or wounded our leader, her husband? They did not know what to think, but I myself fancied, either that he was dead, or that his enterprise was successful, and I was merely anxious and curious to know what he had done.

Suddenly we heard the sound of his trumpet, and we were much surprised that instead of coming from below, as we had expected, it came from the village behind us. What did that mean? It was a mystery to us, but the same idea struck us all, that he had been killed, and that the Prussians were blowing the trumpet to draw us into an ambush. We therefore returned to the cottage, keeping a careful look out, with our fingers on the trigger, and hiding under the branches, but his wife, in spite of our entreaties, rushed on, leaping like a tigress. She thought that she had to avenge her husband, and had fixed the bayonet to her rifle, and we lost sight of her at the moment that we heard the trumpet again, and a few moments later we heard her calling out to us:

"Come on! come on! he is alive! it is he!"

We hastened on, and saw the captain smoking his pipe at the entrance of the village, but strangely enough he was on horseback.

"Ah! Ah!" he said to us, "you see that there is something to be done here. Here I am on horseback already. I knocked over a uhlan yonder, and took his horse; I suppose they were guarding the wood, but it was by drinking and swilling in clover. One of them, the sentry at the door, had not time to see me before I gave him a sugar plum in his stomach, and then, before the others could come out, I jumped on to the horse and was off like a shot. Eight or ten of them followed me, I think, but I took the cross-roads through the woods; I have got scratched and torn a bit, but here I am, and now, my good fellows, attention, and take care! Those brigands will not rest until they have caught us, and we must receive them with rifle

bullets. Come along; let us take up our posts!"

We set out. One of us took up his position a good way from the village of the cross-roads; I was posted at the entrance of the main street, where the road from the level country enters the village, while the two others, the captain and his wife were in the middle of the village, near the church, whose tower served for an observatory and citadel.

We had not been in our places long before we heard a shot followed by another, and then two, then three. The first was evidently a chassepot; one recognized it by the sharp report, which sounds like the crack of a whip, while the other three came from the lancers' carbines.

The captain was furious. He had given orders to the outpost to let the enemy pass and merely to follow them at a distance, if they marched towards the village, and to join me when they had gone well between the houses. Then they were to appear suddenly, take the patrol between two fires, and not allow a single man to escape, for posted as we were, the six of us could have hemmed in ten Prussians, if needful.

"That confounded Piédelot has roused them," the captain said, "and they will not venture to come on blindfold any longer. And then I am quite sure that he has managed to get a shot into himself somewhere or other, for we hear nothing of him. It serves him right; why did he not obey orders? And then, after a moment, he grumbled in his beard: "After all, I am sorry for the poor fellow, he is so brave and shoots so well!"

The captain was right in his conjectures. We waited until evening, without seeing the uhlans: they had re-

treated after the first attack, but unfortunately we had not seen Piédelot either. Was he dead or a prisoner? When night came, the captain proposed that we should go out and look for him, and so the three of us started. At the cross-roads we found a broken rifle and some blood, while the ground was trampled down, but we did not find either a wounded man or a dead body, although we searched every thicket, and at midnight we returned without having discovered anything of our unfortunate comrade.

"It is very strange," the captain growled. "They must have killed him and thrown him into the bushes somewhere; they cannot possibly have taken him prisoner, as he would have called out for help. I cannot understand it all." Just as he said that, bright, red flames shot up in the direction of the inn on the high road, which illuminated the sky.

"Scoundrels! cowards!" he shouted. "I will bet they have set fire to the two houses on the market-place, in order to have their revenge and then they will scuttle off without saying a word. They will be satisfied with having killed a man and setting fire to two houses. All right. It shall not pass over like that. We must go for them; they will not like to leave their illuminations in order to fight."

"It would be a great stroke of luck, if we could set Piédelot free at the same time," some one said.

The five of us set off, full of rage and hope. In twenty minutes we had got to the bottom of the *coulée,* and we had not yet seen anyone, when we had got within a hundred yards of the inn. The fire was behind the house, and so all that we saw of it was the reflection above the roof. However, we were walking

rather slowly, as we were afraid of a trap, when suddenly we heard Piédelot's well-known voice. It had a strange sound, however, for it was at the same time dull and vibrating, stifled and clear, as if he was calling out as loud as he could with a bit of rag stuffed into his mouth. He seemed to be hoarse and panting, and the unlucky fellow kept exclaiming: "Help! Help!"

We sent all thoughts of prudence to the devil, and in two bounds we were at the back of the inn, where a terrible sight met our eyes.

IV

Piedelot was being burnt alive. He was writhing in the middle of a heap of fagots, against a stake to which they had fastened him, and the flames were licking him with their sharp tongues. When he saw us, his tongue seemed to stick in his throat, he drooped his head, and seemed as if he were going to die. It was only the affair of a moment to upset the burning pile, to scatter the embers, and to cut the ropes that fastened him.

Poor fellow! In what a terrible state we found him. The evening before, he had had his left arm broken, and it seemed as if he had been badly beaten since then, for his whole body was covered with wounds, bruises, and blood. The flames had also begun their work on him, and he had two large burns, one on his loins, and the other on his right thigh, and his beard and his hair were scorched. Poor Piédelot!

Nobody knows the terrible rage we felt at this sight! We would have rushed headlong at a hundred thousand Prussians. Our thirst for vengeance was intense but the cowards had run away, leaving their crime be-

hind them. Where could we find them now? Meanwhile, however, the captain's wife was looking after Piédelot, and dressing his wounds as best she could, while the captain himself shook hands with him excitedly and in a few minutes he came to himself.

"Good morning, captain, good morning, all of you," he said. "Ah! the scoundrels, the wretches! Why twenty of them came to surprise us."

"Twenty, do you say?"

"Yes, there was a whole band of them, and that is why I disobeyed orders, captain, and fired on them, for they would have killed you all, so I preferred to stop them. That frightened them, and they did not venture to go further than the cross-roads. They were such cowards. Four of them shot at me at twenty yards, as if I had been a target, and then they slashed me with their swords. My arm was broken so that I could only use my bayonet with one hand."

"But why did you not call for help?"

"I took good care not to do that, for you would all have come, and you would neither have been able to defend me nor yourselves, being only five against twenty."

"You know that we should not have allowed you to have been taken, poor old fellow."

"I preferred to die by myself, don't you see! I did not want to bring you there, for it would have been a mere ambush."

"Well, we will not talk about it any more. Do you feel rather easier?"

"No, I am suffocating. I know that I cannot live much longer. The brutes! They tied me to a tree, and beat me till I felt half dead, and then they shook

my broken arm, but I did not make a sound. I would rather have bitten my tongue out than have called out before them . . . Now I can say what I am suffering and shed tears; it does one good. Thank you, my kind friends."

"Poor Piédelot! But we will avenge you, you may be sure!"

"Yes, yes, I want you to do that. Especially, there is a woman among them, who passes as the wife of the lancer whom the captain killed yesterday. She is dressed like a lancer, and she tortured me the most yesterday, and suggested burning me, and it was she who set fire to the wood. Oh! the wretch, the brute . . . Ah! how I am suffering! My loins, my arms!" and he fell back panting and exhausted, writhing in his terrible agony, while the captain's wife wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and we all shed tears of grief and rage, as if we had been children. I will not describe the end to you; he died half-an-hour later, but before that he told us in which direction the enemy had gone. When he was dead, we gave ourselves time to bury him, and then we set out in pursuit of them, with our hearts full of fury and hatred.

"We will throw ourselves on the whole Prussian army, if it be needful," the captain said, "but we will avenge Piédelot. We must catch those scoundrels. Let us swear to die, rather than not to find them, and if I am killed first, these are my orders: all the prisoners that you make are to be shot immediately, and as for the lancer's wife, she is to be violated before she is put to death."

"She must not be shot, because she is a woman," the captain's wife said. "If you survive, I am sure

that you would not shoot a woman. Outraging her will be quite sufficient; but if you are killed in this pursuit, I want one thing, and that is to fight with her; I will kill her with my own hands, and the others can do what they like with her if she kills me.

"We will outrage her! We will burn her! We will tear her to pieces! Piédelot shall be avenged, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth!"

V

THE next morning we unexpectedly fell on an outpost of uhlans four leagues away. Surprised by our sudden attack, they were not able to mount their horses, nor even to defend themselves, and in a few moments we had five prisoners, corresponding to our own number. The captain questioned them, and from their answers we felt certain that they were the same whom we had encountered the previous day, then a very curious operation took place. One of us was told off to ascertain their sex, and nothing can depict our joy when we discovered what we were seeking among them, the female executioner who had tortured our friend.

The four others were shot on the spot, with their backs towards us, and close to the muzzles of our rifles, and then we turned our attention to the woman; what were we going to do with her? I must acknowledge that we were all of us in favor of shooting her. Hatred, and the wish to avenge Piédelot had extinguished all pity in us, and we had forgotten that we were going to shoot a woman, but a woman reminded us of it, the captain's wife; at her entreaties, therefore, we determined to keep her prisoner.

The captain's poor wife was to be severely punished for this act of clemency.

The next day we heard that the armistice had been extended to the Eastern part of France, and we had to put an end to our little campaign. Two of us, who belonged to the neighborhood, returned home, so there were only four of us, all told; the captain, his wife, and two men. We belonged to Besançon, which was still being besieged in spite of the armistice.

"Let us stop here," said the captain. "I cannot believe that the war is going to end like this. The devil take it. Surely there are men still left in France, and now is the time to prove what they are made of. The spring is coming on, and the armistice is only a trap laid for the Prussians. During the time that it lasts, a new army will be formed, and some fine morning we shall fall upon them again. We shall be ready, and we have a hostage — let us remain here."

We fixed our quarters there. It was terribly cold, and we did not go out much, and somebody had always to keep the female prisoner in sight.

She was sullen and never said anything, or else spoke of her husband, whom the captain had killed. She looked at him continually with fierce eyes, and we felt that she was tortured by a wild longing for revenge. That seemed to us to be the most suitable punishment for the terrible torments that she had made Piédelot suffer, for impotent vengeance is such intense pain!

Alas! we who knew how to avenge our comrade, ought to have thought that this woman would know how to avenge her husband, and have been on our guard. It is true that one of us kept watch every night, and that at first we tied her by a long rope to the great oak

bench that was fastened to the wall. But, by and by, as she had never tried to escape, in spite of her hatred for us, we relaxed our extreme prudence, and allowed her to sleep somewhere else except on the bench, and without being tied. What had we to fear? She was at the end of the room, a man was on guard at the door, and between her and the sentinel the captain's wife and two other men used to lie. She was alone and unarmed against four, so there could be no danger.

One night when we were asleep, and the captain was on guard, the lancer's wife was lying more quietly in her corner than usual, and she had even smiled for the first time since she had been our prisoner, during the evening. Suddenly, however, in the middle of the night, we were all awakened by a terrible cry. We got up, groping about and scarcely were we up when we stumbled over a furious couple who were rolling about and fighting on the ground. It was the captain and the lancer's wife. We threw ourselves on to them, and separated them in a moment. She was shouting and laughing, and he seemed to have the death rattle. All this took place in the dark. Two of us held her, and when a light was struck, a terrible sight met our eyes. The captain was lying on the floor in a pool of blood, with an enormous wound in his throat, and his sword bayonet that had been taken from his rifle, was sticking in the red, gaping wound. A few minutes afterwards he died, without having been able to utter a word.

His wife did not shed a tear. Her eyes were dry, her throat was contracted, and she looked at the lancer's wife steadfastly, and with a calm ferocity that inspired fear.

"This woman belongs to me," she said to us sud-

denly. "You swore to me not a week ago, to let me kill her as I chose, if she killed my husband, and you must keep your oath. You must fasten her securely to the fireplace, upright against the back of it, and then you can go where you like, but far from here. I will take my revenge on her to myself. Leave the captain's body, and we three, he, she, and I, will remain here."

We obeyed and went away. She promised to write to us to Geneva, as we were returning there.

VI

Two days later, I received the following letter, dated the day after we had left, and that had been written at an inn on the high road:

"My Friend,

"I am writing to you, according to my promise. For the moment I am at the inn, where I have just handed my prisoner over to a Prussian officer.

"I must tell you, my friend, that this poor woman has left two children in Germany. She had followed her husband whom she adored, as she did not wish him to be exposed to the risks of war by himself, and as her children were with their grandparents. I have learnt all this since yesterday, and it has turned my ideas of vengeance into more humane feelings. At the very moment when I felt pleasure in insulting this woman, and in threatening her with the most fearful torments, in recalling Piédelot, who had been burnt alive, and in threatening her with a similar death, she looked at me coldly, and said:

"'What have you got to reproach me with, French-

woman? You think that you will do right in avenging your husband's death, is not that so?'

"'Yes, I replied.'

"'Very well then; in killing him, I did what you are going to do in burning me. I avenged my husband, for your husband killed him.'

"'Well,' I replied, 'as you approve of this vengeance, prepare to endure it.'

"'I do not fear it.'

"And in fact she did not seem to have lost courage. Her face was calm, and she looked at me without trembling, while I brought wood and dried leaves together, and feverishly threw on to them the powder from some cartridges, which was to make her funeral pile the more cruel.

"I hesitated in my thoughts of persecution for a moment. But the captain was there, pale and covered with blood, and he seemed to be looking at me with his large, glassy eyes, and I applied myself to my work again after kissing his pale lips. Suddenly, however, on raising my head, I saw that she was crying, and I felt rather surprised.

"'So you are frightened?' I said to her.

"'No, but when I saw you kiss your husband, I thought of mine, of all whom I love."

"She continued to sob, but stopping suddenly she said to me in broken words, and in a low voice:

"'Have you any children?'

"A shiver ran over me, for I guessed that this poor woman had some. She asked me to look in a pocket-book which was in her bosom, and in it I saw two photographs of quite young children, a boy and a girl, with those kind, gentle, chubby faces that German children

have. In it there were also two locks of light hair and a letter in a large childish hand, and beginning with German words which meant: 'My dear little mother.'

"I could not restrain my tears, my dear friend, and so I untied her, and without venturing to look at the face of my poor, dead husband, who was not to be avenged, I went with her as far as the inn. She is free; I have just left her, and she kissed me with tears. I am going upstairs to my husband; come as soon as possible, my dear friend, to look for our two bodies."

I set off with all speed, and when I arrived, there was a Prussian patrol at the cottage, and when I asked what it all meant, I was told that there was a captain of *Franc-tireurs* and his wife inside, both dead. I gave their names; they saw that I knew them, and I begged to be allowed to undertake their funeral.

"Somebody has already undertaken it," was the reply. "Go in if you wish to, as you knew them. You can settle about their funeral with their friend."

I went in. The captain and his wife were lying side by side on a bed, and were covered by a sheet. I raised it, and saw that the woman had inflicted a similar wound in her throat to that from which her husband had died.

At the side of the bed there sat, watching and weeping, the woman who had been mentioned to me as their best friend. It was the lancer's wife.

THE COLONEL'S IDEAS

"UPON my word," Colonel Laporte said, "I am old and gouty, my legs are as stiff as two pieces of wood, and yet if a pretty woman were to tell me to go through the eye of a needle, I believe I should take a jump at it, like a clown through a hoop. I shall die like that; it is in the blood. I am an old beau, one of the old school, and the sight of a woman, a pretty woman, stirs me to the tips of my toes. There!

"And then, we are all very much alike in France; we remain cavaliers, cavaliers of love and fortune, since God has been abolished, whose body-guard we really were. But nobody will ever get a woman out of our hearts; there she is, and there she will remain, and we love her, and shall continue to love her, and go on committing all kinds of frolics on her account, as long as there is a France on the map of Europe, and even if France were to be wiped off the map, there would always be Frenchmen left.

"When I am in the presence of a woman, of a pretty woman, I feel capable of anything. By Jove! When I feel her looks penetrating me, her confounded looks which set your blood on fire, I should like to do I don't know what; to fight a duel, to have a row, to smash the furniture, in order to show that I am the strongest, the bravest, the most daring, and the most devoted of men.

"But I am not the only one, certainly not; the whole French army is like me, that I will swear to you. From

the common soldier to the general, we all go forward, and to the very end, when there is a woman in the case, a pretty woman. Remember what Joan of Arc made us do formerly! Come, I will make a bet that if a pretty woman had taken command of the army on the eve of Sedan, when Marshal Mac-Mahon was wounded, we should have broken through the Prussian lines, by Jove! and have had a drink out of their guns.

"It was not Trochu, but Saint-Geneviève, who was required in Paris, and I remember a little anecdote of the war which proves that we are capable of everything in the presence of a woman.

"I was a captain, a simple captain, at the time, and I was in command of a detachment of scouts, who were retreating through a district which swarmed with Prussians. We were surrounded, pursued, tired out, and half dead with fatigue and hunger, and by the next day we were bound to reach Bar-sur-Tain, otherwise we should be done for, cut off from the main body and killed. I do not know how we managed to escape so far. However, we had ten leagues to go during the night, ten leagues through the snow, and with empty stomachs, and I thought to myself:

"'It is all over; my poor devils of fellows will never be able to do it.'

"We had eaten nothing since the day before, and the whole day long we remained hidden in a barn, and huddled close together, so as not to feel the cold so much; we did not venture to speak or even move, and we slept by fits and starts, like one sleeps when one is worn out with fatigue.

"It was dark by five o'clock; that wan darkness caused by the snow, and I shook my men. Some of

them would not get up; they were almost incapable of moving or of standing upright, and their joints were stiff from the cold and want of motion.

"In front of us, there was a large expanse of flat, bare country; the snow was still falling like a curtain, in large, white flakes, which concealed everything under a heavy, thick, frozen mantle, a mattress of ice. One might have thought that it was the end of the world.

"'Come, my lads, let us start.'

They looked at the thick, white dust which was coming down, and they seemed to think: 'We have had enough of this; we may just as well die here!' Then I took out my revolver, and said:

"'I will shoot the first man who flinches.' And so they set off, but very slowly, like men whose legs were of very little use to them, and I sent four of them three hundred yards ahead, to scout, and the others followed pell-mell, walking at random and without any order. I put the strongest in the rear, with orders to quicken the pace of the sluggards with the points of their bayonets . . . in the back.

"The snow seemed as if it were going to bury us alive; it powdered our *kepis* [1] and cloaks without melting, and made phantoms of us, a species of specters of dead soldiers, who were very tired, and I said to myself: 'We shall never get out of this, except by a miracle.'

"Sometimes we had to stop for a few minutes, on account of those who could not follow us, and then we heard nothing except the falling snow, that vague, almost indiscernible sound which all those flakes make,

[1] Forage Caps.

as they come down together. Some of the men shook themselves, but others did not move, and so I gave the order to set off again; they shouldered their rifles, and with weary feet we set out, when suddenly the scouts fell back. Something had alarmed them; they had heard voices in front of them, and so I sent six men and a sergeant on ahead, and waited.

"All at once a shrill cry, a woman's cry, pierced through the heavy silence of the snow, and in a few minutes they brought back two prisoners, an old man and a girl, and I questioned them in a low voice. They were escaping from the Prussians, who had occupied their house during the evening, and who had got drunk. The father had become alarmed on his daughter's account, and, without even telling their servants, they had made their escape into the darkness. I saw immediately that they belonged to the upper classes, and, as I should have done in any case, I invited them to come with us, and we started off together, and as the old man knew the road, he acted as our guide.

"It had ceased snowing; the stars appeared, and the cold became intense. The girl, who was leaning on her father's arm, walked wearily, and with jerks, and several times she murmured:

"'I have no feeling at all in my feet;' and I suffered more than she did, I believe, to see that poor little woman dragging herself like that through the snow. But suddenly she stopped, and said:

"'Father, I am so tired that I cannot go any further.'

"The old man wanted to carry her, but he could not even lift her up, and she fell on the ground, with a deep sigh. We all came round her, and as for me, I stamped

on the ground, not knowing what to do, and quite unable to make up my mind to abandon that man and girl like that, when suddenly one of the soldiers, a Parisian, whom they had nicknamed *Pratique*, said:

"'Come, comrades, we must carry the young lady, otherwise we shall not show ourselves Frenchmen, confound it!'

"I really believe that I swore with pleasure, and said: 'That is very good of you, my children, and I will take my share of the burden.'

"We could indistinctly see the trees of a little wood on the left, through the darkness, and several men went into it, and soon came back with a bundle of branches twisted into a litter.

"'Who will lend his cloak? It is for a pretty girl, comrades,' Pratique said, and ten cloaks were thrown to him. In a moment, the girl was lying, warm and comfortable, among them, and was raised upon six shoulders. I placed myself at their head, on the right, and very pleased I was with my charge.

"We started off much more briskly, as if we had been having a drink of wine, and I even heard a few jokes. A woman is quite enough to electrify Frenchmen, you see. The soldiers, who were reanimated and warm, had almost reformed their ranks, and an old *franc-tireur* [1] who was following the litter, waiting for his turn to replace the first of his comrades who might give in, said to one of his neighbors, loud enough for me to hear:

"'I am not a young man, now; but by ———, there

[1] Self-constituted volunteers, in the Franco-German war of 1870–71, whom the Germans often made short work of, when caught.—TRANSLATOR.

is nothing like the women to make you feel queer from head to foot!'

"We went on, almost without stopping, until three o'clock in the morning, when suddenly our scouts fell back again, and soon the whole detachment showed nothing but a vague shadow on the ground, as the men lay on the snow, and I gave my orders in a low voice, and heard the harsh, metallic sound of the cocking of rifles. For there, in the middle of the plain, some strange object was moving about. It might have been taken for some enormous animal running about, which unfolded itself like a serpent, or came together into a coil, suddenly went quickly to the right or left, stopped, and then went on again. But presently that wandering shape came near, and I saw a dozen lancers, one behind the other, who were trying to find their way, which they had lost.

"They were so near by that time, that I could hear the panting of the horses, the clink of their swords, and the creaking of their saddles, and so cried: 'Fire!'

"Fifty rifle shots broke the stillness of the night, then there were four or five reports, and at last one single shot was heard, and when the smoke had cleared away, we saw that the twelve men and nine horses had fallen. Three of the animals were galloping away at a furious pace, and one of them was dragging the body of its rider, which rebounded from the ground in a terrible manner, whose foot had caught in the stirrup behind it.

"One of the soldiers behind me gave a terrible laugh, and said: 'There are a number of widows there!'

"Perhaps he was married. And a third added: 'It did not take long!'

"A head was put out of the litter:

"'What is the matter?' she asked; 'you are fighting?'

"'It is nothing, Mademoiselle,' I replied; 'we have got rid of a dozen Prussians!'

"'Poor fellows!' she said. But as she was cold, she quickly disappeared beneath the cloaks again, and we started off once more. We marched on for a long time, and at last the sky began to grow pale. The snow became quite clear, luminous and bright, and a rosy tint appeared in the East, and suddenly a voice in the distance cried:

"'Who goes there?'

"'The whole detachment halted, and I advanced to say who we were. We had reached the French lines, and as my men defiled before the outpost, a commandant on horseback, whom I had informed of what had taken place, asked in a sonorous voice, as he saw the litter pass him: 'What have you there?'

"'And immediately, a small head, covered with light hair, appeared, disheveled and smiling, and replied:

"'It is I, Monsieur.'

"At this, the men raised a hearty laugh, and we felt quite light-hearted, while Pratique, who was walking by the side of the litter, waved his *kepi,* and shouted:

"'*Vive la France!*' And I felt really moved. I do not know why, except that I thought it a pretty and gallant thing to say.

"It seemed to me as if we had just saved the whole of France, and had done something that other men could not have done, something simple and really patriotic. I shall never forget that little face, you may be

sure, and if I had to give my opinion about abolishing drums, trumpets, and bugles, I should propose to replace them in every regiment by a pretty girl, and that would be even better than playing the *Marseillaise*. By Jove! It would put some spirit into a trooper to have a Madonna like that, a living Madonna, by the colonel's side."

He was silent for a few moments, and then continued, with an air of conviction, and jerking his head:

"All the same, we are very fond of women, we Frenchmen!"

ONE EVENING

THE steamboat *Kleber* had stopped, and I was admiring the beautiful bay of Bougie, that was opened out before us. The high hills were covered with forests, and in the distance the yellow sands formed a beach of powdered gold, while the sun shed its fiery rays on the white houses of the town.

The warm African breeze blew the odor of that great, mysterious continent into which men of the Northern races but rarely penetrate, into my face. For three months I had been wandering on the borders of that great, unknown world, on the outskirts of that strange world of the ostrich, the camel, the gazelle, the hippopotamus, the gorilla, the lion and the tiger, and the negro. I had seen the Arab galloping like the wind, and passing like a floating standard, and I had slept under those brown tents, the moving habitation of those white birds of the desert, and I felt, as it were, intoxicated with light, with fancy, and with space.

But now, after this final excursion, I should have to start, to return to France and to Paris, that city of useless chatter, of common-place cares, and of continual hand-shaking, and I should bid adieu to all that I had got to like so much, which was so new to me, which I had scarcely had time to see thoroughly, and which I so much regretted to leave.

A fleet of small boats surrounded the steamer, and, jumping into one rowed by a negro lad, I soon reached the quay near the old Saracen gate, whose gray ruins

at the entrance of the Kabyle town, looked like an old escutcheon of nobility. While I was standing by the side of my portmanteau, looking at the great steamer lying at anchor in the roads, and filled with admiration at that unique shore, and that semi-circle of hills, bathed in blue light, which were more beautiful than those of Ajaccio, or of Porto, in Corsica, a heavy hand was laid on my shoulder, and on turning round I saw a tall man with a long beard, dressed in white flannel, and wearing a straw hat, standing by my side, and looking at me with his blue eyes.

"Are you not an old school-fellow of mine?" he said.

"It is very possible. What is your name?"

"Trémoulin."

"By Jove! You were in the same class as I was."

"Ah! Old fellow, I recognized you immediately."

He seemed so pleased, so happy at seeing me, that in an outburst of friendly selfishness, I shook both the hands of my former school-fellow heartily, and felt very pleased at meeting him thus.

For four years Trémoulin had been one of the best and most intimate school friends, one of those whom we are too apt to forget as soon as we leave. In those days he had been a tall, thin fellow, whose head seemed to be too heavy for his body; it was a large, round head, and hung sometimes to the right and sometimes to the left, onto his chest. Trémoulin was very clever, however, and had a marvelous aptitude for learning, and had an instinctive intuition for all literary studies, and gained nearly all the prizes in our class.

We were fully convinced at school, that he would

turn out a celebrated man, a poet, no doubt, for he wrote verses, and was full of ingeniously sentimental ideas. His father, who kept a chemist's shop near the *Pantheon,* was not supposed to be very well off, and I had lost sight of him as soon as he had taken his bachelor's degree, and now I naturally asked him what he was doing there.

"I am a planter," he replied.

"Bah! You really plant?"

"And I have my harvest."

"What is it?"

"Grapes, from which I make wine."

"Is your wine-growing a success?"

"A great success."

"So much the better, old fellow."

"Were you going to the hotel?"

"Of course I was."

"Well, then, you must just come home with me, instead!"

"But! . . ."

"The matter is settled."

And he said to the young negro who was watching our movements: "Take that home, Al."

And the lad put my portmanteau on his shoulder, and set off, raising the dust with his black feet, while Trémoulin took my arm and led me off. First of all, he asked me about my journey, and what impressions it had had on me, and seeing how enthusiastic I was about it, he seemed to like me better than ever. He lived in an old Moorish house, with an interior courtyard, without any windows looking into the street, and commanded by a terrace, which, in its turn, commanded

those of the neighboring houses, as well as the bay, and the forests, the hill, and the open sea, and I could not help exclaiming:

"Ah! That is what I like; the whole of the East lays hold of me in this place. You are indeed lucky to be living here! What nights you must spend upon that terrace! Do you sleep there?"

"Yes, in the summer. We will go onto it this evening. Are you fond of fishing?"

"What kind of fishing?"

"Fishing by torchlight."

"Yes, I am particularly fond of it."

"Very well, then, we will go after dinner, and we will come back and drink sherbet on my roof."

After I had had a bath, he took me to see the charming Kabyle town, a veritable cascade of white houses toppling down to the sea, and then, when it was getting dusk, we went in, and after an excellent dinner, we went down to the quay, and we saw nothing except the fires and the stars, those large, bright, scintillating African stars. A boat was waiting for us, and as soon as we had got in, a man whose face I could not distinguish, began to row, while my friend was getting ready the brazier which he would light later, and he said to me: "You know I have a mania for a fish-spear, and nobody can handle it better than I can."

"Allow me to compliment you on your skill." We had rowed round a kind of mole, and now we were in a small bay full of high rocks, whose shadows looked like towers built in the water, and I suddenly perceived that the sea was phosphorescent, and as the oars moved gently, they seemed to light up moving flames, that followed in our wake, and then died out, and I leant

over the side of the boat and watched it, as we glided over that glimmer in the darkness.

Where were we going to? I could not see my neighbors; in fact, I could see nothing but the luminous ripple, and the sparks of water dropping from the oars; it was hot, very hot, and the darkness seemed as hot as a furnace, and this mysterious motion with these two men in that silent boat, had a peculiar effect upon me.

Suddenly the rower stopped. Where were we? I heard a slight scratching noise close to me, and I saw a hand, nothing but a hand applying a lighted match to the iron grating which was fastened over the bows of the boat, which was covered with wood, as if it had been a floating funeral pile, and which soon was blazing brightly and illuminating the boat and the two men, an old, thin, pale, wrinkled sailor, with a pocket-handkerchief tied round his head, instead of a cap, and Trémoulin, whose fair beard glistened in the light.

The other began to row again, while Trémoulin kept throwing wood onto the brazier, which burnt red and brightly. I leant over the side again, and could see the bottom, and a few feet below us there was that strange country of the water, which vivifies plants and animals, just like the air of heaven does. Trémoulin, who was standing in the bows with his body bent forward, and holding the sharp-pointed trident in his hand, was on the lookout with the ardent gaze of a beast of prey watching for its spoil, and, suddenly, with a swift movement, he darted his forked weapon into the sea so vigorously that it secured a large fish swimming near the bottom. It was a conger eel, which managed to wriggle, half dead as it was, into a puddle of the brackish water.

Trémoulin again threw his spear, and when he pulled it up, I saw a great lump of red flesh which palpitated, moved, rolled and unrolled, long, strong, soft feelers round the handle of the trident. It was an octopus, and Trémoulin opened his knife, and with a swift movement plunged it between the eyes, and killed it. And so our fishing continued until the wood began to run short. When there was not enough left to keep up the fire, Trémoulin dipped the braziers into the sea, and we were again buried in darkness.

The old sailor began to row again, slowly and regularly, though I could not tell where the land or where the port was. By-and-bye, however, I saw lights. We were nearing the harbor.

"Are you sleepy?" my friend said to me.

"Not the slightest."

"Then we will go and have a chat on the roof."

"I shall be delighted."

Just as we got onto the terrace, I saw the crescent moon rising behind the mountains, and around us, the white houses, with their flat roofs, descending down towards the sea, while human forms were standing or lying on them, sleeping or dreaming under the stars; whole families wrapped in long gowns, and resting in the calm night, after the heat of the day.

It suddenly seemed to me as if the Eastern mind were taking possession of me, the poetical and legendary spirit of a people with simply and flowery thoughts. My head was full of the Bible and of *The Arabian Nights;* I could hear the prophets proclaiming miracles, and I could see princesses wearing silk drawers on the roofs of the palaces, while delicate perfumes, whose

smoke assumed the forms of genii, were burning on silver dishes, and I said to Trémoulin:

"You are very fortunate in living here."

"I came here quite by accident," he replied.

"By accident?"

"Yes, accident and unhappiness brought me here."

"You have been unhappy?"

"Very unhappy."

He was standing in front of me, wrapped in his bournoose, and his voice had such a painful ring in it that it almost made me shiver; after a moment's silence, he continued:

"I will tell you what my troubles have been; perhaps it will do me good to speak about them."

"Let me hear them."

"Do you really wish it?"

"Yes."

"Very well, then. You remember what I was at school; a sort of poet, brought up in a chemist's shop. I dreamt of writing books, and I tried it, after taking my degree, but I did not succeed. I published a volume of verse, and then a novel, and neither of them sold, and then I wrote a play, which was never acted."

"Next, I lost my heart, but I will not give you an account of my passion. Next door to my father's shop, there was a tailor's, who had a daughter, with whom I fell in love. She was very clever, and had obtained her certificates for higher education, and her mind was bright and active, quite in keeping indeed with her body. She might have been taken for fifteen, although she was two-and-twenty. She was very small, with delicate features, outlines and tints, just like some beautiful

water color. Her nose, her mouth, her blue eyes, her light hair, her smile, her waist, her hands, all looked as if they were fit for a stained window, and not for everyday life, but she was lively, supple, and incredibly active, and I was very much in love with her. I remember two or three walks in the Luxembourg Garden, near the *Medices* fountain, which were certainly the happiest hours of my life. I dare say you have known that foolish condition of tender madness, which causes us to think of nothing but of acts of adoration! One really becomes possessed, haunted by a woman, and nothing exists for us, by the side of her.

"We soon became engaged, and I told her my projects of the future, which she did not approve of. She did not believe that I was either a poet, a novelist, or a dramatic author, and thought a prosperous business could afford perfect happiness. So I gave up the idea of writing books, and resigned myself to selling them, and I bought a bookseller's business at Marseilles, the owner of which had just died.

"I had three very prosperous years. We had made our shop into a sort of literary drawing-room, where all the men of letters in the town used to come and talk. They came in, as if it had been a club, and exchanged ideas on books, on poets, and especially on politics. My wife, who took a very active part in the business, enjoyed quite a reputation in the town, but, as for me, while they were all talking downstairs, I was working in my studio upstairs, which communicated with the shop by a winding staircase. I could hear their voices, their laughter, and their discussions, and sometimes I left off writing in order to listen. I kept in my own room to write a novel - - which I never finished.

"The most regular frequenters of the shop were Monsieur Montina, a man of good private means, a tall, handsome man, like one meets with in the South of France, with an olive skin, and dark, expressive eyes; Monsieur Barbet, a magistrate; two merchants, who were partners, Messrs. Faucil and Labarrègue, and General, the Marquis de la Flèche, the head of the Royalist party, the principal man in the whole district, an old fellow of sixty-six.

"My business prospered, and I was happy, very happy. One day, however, about three o'clock, when I was out on business, as I was going through the *Rue Saint Ferréol,* I suddenly saw a woman come out of a house, whose figure and appearance were so much like my wife's that I should have said to myself: 'There she is!' if I had not left her in the shop half an hour before, suffering from a headache. She was walking quickly on before me, without turning round, and, in spite of myself, I followed her, as I felt surprised and uneasy. I said to myself: 'It it she; no, it is quite impossible, as she has a sick headache. And then, what could she have to do in that house?' However, as I wished to have the matter cleared up, I made haste after her. I do not know whether she felt or guessed that I was behind her, or whether she recognized my step, but she turned round suddenly. It was she! When she saw me, she grew very red and stopped, and then, with a smile, she said: 'Oh! Here you are!' I felt choking.

"'Yes; so you have come out? And how is your headache?'

"'It is better, and I have been out on an errand.'

"'Where?'

"'To Lacaussade's, in the Rue Cassinelli, to order some pencils.'

"She looked me full in the face. She was not flushed now, but rather pale, on the contrary. Her clear, limpid eyes — ah! those women's eyes! — appeared to be full of truth, but I felt vaguely and painfully that they were full of lies. I was much more confused and embarrassed than she was herself, without venturing to suspect, but sure that she was lying, though I did not know why, and so I merely said:

"'You were quite right to go out, if you felt better.'

"'Oh! yes; my head is much better.'

"'Are you going home?'

"'Yes, of course I am.'

"I left her, and wandered about the streets by myself. What was going on? While I was talking to her, I had an intuitive feeling of her falseness, but now I could not believe that it was so, and when I returned home to dinner, I was angry for having suspected her, even for a moment.

"Have you ever been jealous? It does not matter whether you have or not, but the first drop of jealousy had fallen into my heart, and that is always like a spark of fire. It did not formulate anything, and I did not think anything; I only knew that she had lied. You must remember that every night, after the customers and clerks had left, we were alone, and either strolled as far as the harbor, when it was fine, or remained talking in my office, if the weather was bad, and I used to open my heart to her without any reserve, because I loved her. She was part of my life, the greater part, and all my happiness, and in her small hands she held my trusting, faithful heart captive.

"During those first days, those days of doubt, and before my suspicions increased and assumed a precise shape, I felt as depressed and chilly as when we are going to be seriously ill. I was continually cold, really cold, and could neither eat nor sleep. Why had she told me a lie? What was she doing in that house? I went there, to try and find out something, but I could discover nothing. The man who rented the first floor, and who was an upholsterer, had told me all about his neighbors, but without helping me the least. A midwife had lived on the second floor, a dressmaker and a manicure and chiropodist on the third, and two coachmen and their families in the attics.

"Why had she told me a lie? It would have been so easy for her to have said that she had been to the dressmaker's or the chiropodist's. Oh! How I longed to question them, also! I did not say so, for fear that she might guess my suspicions. One thing, however, was certain; she had been into that house, and had concealed the fact from me, so there was some mystery in it. But what? At one moment, I thought there might be some laudable purpose in it, some charitable deed that she wished to hide, some information which she wished to obtain, and I found fault with myself for suspecting her. Have not all of us the right of our little, innocent secrets, a kind of second, interior life, for which one ought not to be responsible to anybody? Can a man, because he has taken a girl to be his companion through life, demand that she shall neither think nor do anything without telling him, either before or afterwards? Does the word marriage mean renouncing all liberty and independence? Was it not quite possible that she was going to the dressmaker's

without telling me, or that she was going to assist the family of one of the coachmen? Or she might have thought that I might criticize, if not blame, her visit to the house. She knew me thoroughly, and my slightest peculiarities, and perhaps she feared a discussion, even if she did not think that I should find fault with her. She had very pretty hands, and I ended by supposing that she was having them secretly attended to by the manicure in the house which I suspected, and that she did not tell me of it, for fear that I should think her extravagant. She was very methodical and economical, and looked after all her household duties most carefully, and no doubt she thought that she should lower herself in my eyes, were she to confess that slight piece of feminine extravagance. Women have very many subtleties and innate tricks in their soul!

"But none of my own arguments reassured me. I was jealous, and I felt that my suspicion was affecting me terribly, that I was being devoured by it. I felt secret grief and anguish, and a thought which I still veiled, and I did not dare to lift the veil, for beneath it I should find a terrible doubt. . . . A lover! . . . Had not she a lover? . . . It was unlikely, impossible. . . . A mere dream . . . and yet? . . .

"I continually saw Montina's face before my eyes. I saw the tall, silly-looking, handsome man, with his bright hair, smiling into her face, and I said to myself: 'He is the one!' I concocted a story of their intrigues. They had talked a book over together, had discussed the love ventures it contained, had found something in it that resembled them, and they had turned that analogy into reality. And so I watched

them, a prey to the most terrible sufferings that a man can endure. I bought shoes with india-rubber soles, so that I might be able to walk about the house without making any noise, and I spent half my time in going up and down my little spiral staircase, in the hope of surprising them, but I always found that the clerk was with them.

"I lived in a constant state of suffering. I could no longer work, nor attend to my business. As soon as I went out, as soon as I had walked a hundred yards along the street, I said to myself: 'He is there!' and when I found he was not there, I went out again! But almost immediately I went back again, thinking: 'He has come now!' and that went on every day.

"At night it was still worse, for I felt her by my side in bed asleep, or pretending to be asleep! Was she really sleeping? No, most likely not. Was that another lie?

"I remained motionless on my back, hot from the warmth of her body, panting and tormented. Oh! how intensely I longed to get up, to get a hammer and to split her head open, so as to be able to see inside it! I knew that I should have seen nothing except what is to be found in every head, and I should have discovered nothing, for that would have been impossible. And her eyes! When she looked at me, I felt furious with rage. I looked at her . . . she looked at me! Her eyes were transparent, candid . . . and false, false! Nobody could tell what she was thinking of, and I felt inclined to run pins into them, and to destroy those mirrors of falseness.

"Ah! how well I could understand the Inquisition! I would have applied the torture, the boot. . . .

Speak! . . . Confess! . . . You will not? . . . Then wait! . . . And I would have seized her by the throat until I choked her. . . . Or else I would have held her fingers into the fire. . . . Oh! how I should have enjoyed doing it! . . . Speak! . . . Speak! . . . You will not? I would have held them on the coals, and when the tips were burnt, she would have confessed . . . certainly she would have confessed!"

Trémoulin was sitting up, shouting, with clenched fists. Around us, on the neighboring roofs, people awoke and sat up, as he was disturbing their sleep. As for me, I was moved and powerfully interested, and in the darkness I could see that little woman, that little, fair, lively, artful woman, as if I had known her personally. I saw her selling her books, talking with the men whom her childish ways attracted, and in her delicate, doll-like head, I could see little crafty ideas, silly ideas, the dreams which a milliner smelling of musk attached to all heroes of romantic adventures. I suspected her just like he did, I hated and detested her, and would willingly have burnt her fingers and made her confess.

Presently, he continued more calmly: "I do not know why I have told you all this, for I have never mentioned it to anyone, but then, I have not seen anybody or spoken to anybody for two years! And it was seething in my heart like a fermenting wine. I have got rid of it, and so much the worse for you. Well, I had made a mistake, but it was worse than I thought, much worse. Just listen. I employed the means which a man always does under such circumstances, and pretended that I was going to be away from home for a

day, and whenever I did this my wife went out to lunch. I need not tell you how I bribed a waiter in the restaurant to which they used to go, so that I might surprise them.

"He was to open the door of their private room for me and I arrived at the appointed time, with the fixed determination of killing them both. I could see the whole scene, just as if it had already occurred! I could see myself going in. A small table covered with glasses, bottles and plates separated her from Montina, and they would be so surprised when they saw me, that they would not even attempt to move, and without a word, I should bring down the loaded stick which I had in my hand, on the man's head. Killed by one blow, he would fall with his head on the table, and then, turning towards her, I should leave her time — a few moments — to understand it all and to stretch out her arms towards me, mad with terror, before dying in her turn. Oh! I was ready, strong, determined, and pleased, madly pleased at the idea. The idea of the terrified look that she would throw at my raised stick, of her arms that she would stretch out to me, of her horrified cry, of her livid and convulsed looks, avenged me beforehand. I would not kill her at one blow! You will think me cruel, I dare say; but you do not know what a man suffers. To think that a woman, whether she be wife or mistress, whom one loves, gives herself to another, yields herself up to him as she does to you, and receives kisses from his lips, as she does from yours! It is a terrible, an atrocious thing to think of. When one feels that torture, one is ready for anything. I only wonder that more women are not murdered, for every man who has been deceived longs to commit mur-

der, has dreamt of it in the solitude of his own room, or on a deserted road, and has been haunted by the one fixed idea of satisfied vengeance.

" I arrived at the restaurant, and asked whether they were there. The waiter whom I had bribed replied: ' Yes, Monsieur,' and taking me upstairs, he pointed to a door, and said: ' That is the room! ' So I grasped my stick, as if my fingers had been made of iron, and went in. I had chosen a most appropriate moment, for they were kissing most lovingly, but it was not Montina; it was General de la Fléche, who was sixty-six years old, and I had so fully made up my mind that I should find the other one there, I was motionless from astonishment.

" And then . . . and then, I really do not quite know what I thought; no, I really do not know. If I had found myself face to face with the other, I should have been convulsed with rage, but on seeing this old man, with a fat stomach and pendulous cheeks, I was nearly choked with disgust. She, who did not look fifteen, small and slim as she was, had given herself to this fat man, who was nearly paralyzed, because he was a marquis and a general, the friend and representative of dethroned kings. No, I do not know what I felt, nor what I thought. I could not have lifted my hand against this old man; it would have been a disgrace to me, and I no longer felt inclined to kill my wife, but all women who could be guilty of such things! I was no longer jealous, but felt distracted, as if I had seen the horror of horrors!

" Let people say what they like of men, they are not so vile as that! If a man is known to have given himself up to an old woman in that fashion, people point

their fingers at him. The husband or lover of an old woman is more despised than a thief. We men are a decent lot, as a rule, but many women, especially in Paris, are absolutely bad. They will give themselves to all men, old or young, from the most contemptible and different motives, because it is their profession, their vocation, and their function. They are the eternal, unconscious, and serene prostitutes, who give up their bodies, because they are the merchandise of love, which they sell or give, to the old man who frequents the pavements with money in his pocket, or else for glory, to a lecherous old king, or to a celebrated and disgusting old man."

He vociferated like a prophet of old, in a furious voice, under the starry sky, and with the rage of a man in despair, he repeated all the glorified disgrace of all the mistresses of old kings, the respectable shame of all those virgins who marry old husbands, the tolerated disgrace of all those young women who accept old kisses with a smile.

I could see them, as he evoked their memory, since the beginning of the world, surging round us in that Eastern night, girls, beautiful girls, with vile souls, who, like the lower animals, who know nothing of the age of the male, are docile to senile desires. They rose up before one, the handmaids of the patriarchs, who are mentioned in the Bible, Hagar, Ruth, the daughters of Lot, Abigail, Abishag, the virgin of Shunam, who reanimated David with her caresses when he was dying, and the others, young, stout, white, patricians or plebeians, irresponsible females belonging to a master, and submissive slaves, whether caught by the attraction of royalty, or bought as slaves!

"What did you do?" I asked.

"I went away," he replied simply. And we remained sitting side by side for a long time without speaking, only dreaming! . . .

I have retained an impression of that evening that I can never forget. All that I saw, felt, and heard, our fishing excursion, the octopus also, perhaps that harrowing story, amidst those white figures on the neighboring roofs, all seemed to concur in producing a unique sensation. Certain meetings, certain inexplicable combinations of things, decidedly contain a larger quantity of the secret quintessence of life, than that which is spread over the ordinary events of our days, without anything exceptional happening to them.

"UPON my word, I laughed at it as much as the rest," Navarette exclaimed; "I laughed at it with that profound, cruel pitilessness which we all of us, who are well made and vigorous, feel for those whom their step-mother, Nature, has disfigured in some way or other, for those laughable, feeble creatures who are, however, more to be pitied than those poor deformed wretches from whom we turn away in spite of ourselves.

"I had been the first to make fun of him at the club, to find those easy words which are remembered, and to turn that smooth, flabby, pink, ugly face, like that of an old woman, and of a Levantine eunuch in which the mouth is like a piece of inert flesh, and where the small eyes glisten with concentrated cunning, and remind us of the watchful, angry eyes of a gorilla, at the same time, into ridicule. I knew that he was selfish, without any affection, unreliable, full of whims, turning like a weathercock with every wind that blows, and caring for nothing in the world except gambling and old Dresden china.

"However, our intercourse was invariably limited to a careless, 'Good-morning,' and to the usual shake of the hands which men exchange when they meet at the theater or the club, and so I had neither to defend him, nor to uphold him as a friend. But I can swear to you that now I reproach myself for all these effusive jeers and bitter things, and they weigh on my conscience now

that I have been told the other side, the equivocal enigma of that existence."

"A Punch and Judy secret," Bob Shelley said, throwing the end of his cigar into the fire.

"Oh! yes; we were a hundred miles from the truth when we merely supposed that he was unfit for service. This unhappy Lantosque, a well-born, clever man, and very rich to boot, might have exhibited himself in some traveling booth, for he was an hermaphrodite; do you understand? an hermaphrodite. And his whole life was one of long, incessant torture, of physical and moral suffering, which was more maddening than that which Tantalus endured on the banks of the river Acheron. He had nearly everything of the woman about him; he was a ridiculous caricature of our sex, with his shrill voice, his large hips, his bust concealed by a loose, wide coat, his cheeks, his chin, and upper lip without a vestige of hair, and he had to appear like a man, to restrain and stifle his instincts, his tastes, desires, and dreams, to fight ceaselessly against himself, and never to allow anything of that which he endured, nor what he longed for, nor that which was sapping his very life, to be discovered.

"Once only he was on the point of betraying himself, in spite of himself. He ardently loved a man, as Chloe must have loved Daphnis. He could not master himself, or calm his feverish passion, and went towards the abyss as if seized by mental giddiness. He could imagine nothing handsomer, more desirable, or more charming than that chance friend. He had sudden transports, fits of surprise, tenderness, curiosity, jealousy, the ardent longings of an old maid who is afraid of dying a virgin, who is waiting for love as for

her deliverance, who attaches herself and devotes herself to a lover with her whole being, and who grows emaciated and dries up, and remains misunderstood and despised.

"And as they have both disappeared now, the lover dead from a sword thrust in the middle of the chest, at Milan, on account of some ballet girl, and as he certainly died without knowing that he had inspired such a passion, I may tell you his name.

"He was Count Sebinico, who used to deal at faro with such delicate, white hands, and who wore rings on nearly every finger, who had such a musical voice, and who, with his wavy hair, and his delicate profile, looked like a handsome, Florentine Condottiere.

"It must be very terrible to be thus ashamed of oneself, to have that longing for kisses which console the most wretched in their misery, which satisfy hunger and thirst, and assuage pain; that illusion of delicious, intoxicating kisses, the delight and the balm of which such a person can never know; the horror of that dishonor of being pointed at, made fun of, driven away like unclean creatures that prostitute their sex, and make love vile by unmentionable rites; oh! the constant bitterness of seeing that the person we love makes fun of us, ill-uses us, and does not show us even the slightest friendship!"

"Poor devil!" Jean d'Orthyse said, in a sad and moved voice. "In his place, I should have blown my brains out."

"Everybody says that, my dear fellow, but how few there are who venture to forestall that intruder, who always come too quickly."

Lantosque had splendid health, and declared that

he had never put a penny into a doctor's pocket, and if he had allowed himself to have been looked after when he was confined to his bed two months before, by an attack of influenza, we should still be hearing him propose a game of poker before dinner, in his shrill voice. His death, however, was as tragic and mysterious as all those tales from beyond the grave are, on which the Invisible rests.

"Although he had a cough, which threatened to tear his chest to pieces, and although he was haunted by the fear of death, of that great depth of darkness in which we lose ourselves in the abyss of Annihilation and Oblivion, he obstinately refused to have his chest sounded, and repulsed Doctor Pertuzés almost furiously, who thought he had gone out of his mind.

"He cowered down, and covered himself with the bed-clothes up to his chin, and found strength enough to tear up the prescriptions, and to drive everyone, whether friend or relation, who tried to make him listen to reason, and who could not understand his attacks of rage and neurosis from his bedside. He seemed to be possessed by some demon, like those women in hysterical convulsions, whom the bishops used formerly to exorcise with much pomp. It was painful to see him.

"That went on for a week, during which time the pneumonia had ample opportunities for ravaging and giving the finishing stroke to his body, which had been so robust and free from ailments hitherto, and he died, trying to utter some last words which nobody understood, and endeavoring to point out one particular article of furniture in the room.

"His nearest relation was a cousin, the Marquis de Territet, a skeptic, who lived in Burgundy, and whom

all this disturbance had upset in his habits, and whose only desire was to get it all over, the legal formalities, the funeral, and all the rest of it, as soon as possible.

" Without reflecting on the strange suggestiveness of that death-bed, and without looking to see whether there might not be, somehow or other, a will in which Lantosque expressed his last wishes, he wanted to spare his corpse the contact of mercenary hands, and to lay him out himself.

" You may judge of his surprise when, on throwing back the bed-clothes, he first of all saw that Lantosque was dressed from head to foot in tights, which accentuated, rather than otherwise, his female form.

" Much alarmed, feeling that he must have been violating some supreme order, and comprehending it all, he went to his cousin's writing-table, opened it, and successively searched every drawer, and soon found an envelope fastened with five seals, and addressed to him. He broke them and read as follows, written on a sheet of black-edged paper:

" ' This is my only will. I leave all that I possess to my cousin, Roland de Territet, on condition that he will undertake my funeral; that in his own presence, he will have me wrapped up in the sheets of the bed on which I die, and have me put into the coffin so, without any further preparations. I wish to be cremated at *Père-Lachaise,* and not to be subjected to any examination, or *post-mortem,* whatever may happen. ' "

" And how came the marquis to betray the secret? " Bob Shelley asked.

" The marquis is married to a charming Parisian woman, and was any married man, who loved his wife, ever known to keep a secret from her? "

MARROCA

YOU ask me, my dear friend, to send you my impressions of Africa, my adventures, and especially an account of my love affairs in this country which has attracted me for so long. You laughed a great deal beforehand at my dusky sweethearts, as you called them, and declared that you could see me returning to France, followed by a tall, ebony-colored woman, with a yellow silk handkerchief round her head, and wearing voluminous bright-colored trousers.

No doubt the Moorish women will have their turn, for I have seen several of them who have made me feel very much inclined to have to fall in love with them; but by way of making a beginning, I came across something better, and very original.

In your last letter to me, you say: "When I know how people love in a country, I know that country well enough to describe it, although I may never have seen it." Let me tell you, then, that here they love furiously. From the very first moment, one feels a sort of trembling ardor, of constant desire, to the very tips of the fingers, which over-excites our amorous powers, and all our faculties of physical sensation, from the simple contact of the hands, down to that unnamable requirement which makes us commit so many follies.

Do not misunderstand me. I do not know whether you call love of the heart, love of the soul, whether sentimental idealism, Platonic love, in a word, can exist on this earth; I doubt it, myself. But that other love,

sensual love, which has something good, a great deal of good about it, is really terrible in this climate. The heat, the burning atmosphere which makes you feverish, those suffocating blasts of wind from the south, those waves of fire which come from the desert which is so near us, that oppressive sirocco, which is more destructive and withering than fire, that perpetual conflagration of an entire continent, that is burnt even to its stones by a fierce and devouring sun, inflame the blood, excite the flesh, and make brutes of us.

But to come to my story, I shall not tell you about the beginning of my stay in Africa. After going to Bona, Constantine, Biskara and Setif, I went to Bougie through the defiles of Chabet, by an excellent road through a large forest, which follows the sea at a height of six hundred feet above it, as far as that wonderful bay of Bougie, which is as beautiful as that of Naples, of Ajaccio, or of Douarnenez, which are the most lovely that I know.

Far away in the distance, before one goes round the large inlet where the water is perfectly calm, one sees the Bougie. It is built on the steep sides of a high hill, which is covered with trees, and forms a white spot on that green slope; it might almost be taken for the foam of a cascade, falling into the sea.

I had no sooner set foot in that delightful, small town, than I knew that I should stay for a long time. In all directions the eye rests on rugged, strangely shaped hill-tops, which are so close together that one can hardly see the open sea, so that the gulf looks like a lake. The blue water is wonderfully transparent, and the azure sky, a deep azure, as if it had received two coats of paint, expands its wonderful beauty above

it. They seem to be looking at themselves in a glass, and to be a reflection of each other.

Bougie is a town of ruins, and on the quay, when one arrives, one sees such a magnificent ruin, that one might imagine one was at the opera. It is the old Saracen Gate, overgrown with ivy, and there are ruins in all directions on the hills round the town, fragments of Roman walls, bits of Saracen monuments, the remains of Arabic buildings.

I had taken a small, Moorish house, in the upper town. You know those dwellings, which have been described so often. They have no windows on the outside; but they are lighted from top to bottom, by an inner court. On the first floor, they have a large, cool room, in which one spends the days, and a terrace on the roof, on which one spends the nights.

I at once fell in with the custom of all hot countries, that is to say, of having a siesta after lunch. That is the hottest time in Africa, the time when one can scarcely breathe; when the streets, the fields, and the long, dazzling, white roads are deserted, when everyone is asleep, or at any rate, trying to sleep, attired as scantily as possible.

In my drawing-room, which had columns of Arabic architecture, I had placed a large, soft couch, covered with a carpet from Djebel Amour, very nearly in the costume of Assan, but I could not sleep, as I was tortured by my continence. There are two forms of torture on this earth, which I hope you will never know: the want of water, and the want of women, and I do not know which is the worst. In the desert, men would commit any infamy for the sake of a glass of clean, cold water, and what would one not do in some of the towns

of the littoral, for a handsome, fleshy, healthy girl? For there is no lack of girls in Africa; on the contrary, they abound, but to continue my comparison, they are as unwholesome and decayed as the muddy water in the wells of Sahara.

Well, one day when I was feeling more enervated than usual, I was trying in vain to close my eyes. My legs twitched as if they were being pricked, and I tossed about uneasily on my couch, until at last, unable to bear it any longer, I got up and went out. It was a terribly hot day, in the middle of July, and the pavement was hot enough to bake bread on. My shirt, which was soaked with perspiration immediately, clung to my body, and on the horizon there was a slight, white vapor, which seemed to be palpable heat.

I went down to the sea, and going round the port, I went along the shore of the pretty bay where the baths are. There was nobody about, and nothing was stirring; not a sound of bird or of beast was to be heard, the very waves did not lap, and the sea appeared to be asleep in the sun.

Suddenly, behind one of the rocks, which were half covered by the silent water, I heard a slight movement, and on turning round, I saw a tall, naked girl, sitting up to her breasts in the water, taking a bath; no doubt she reckoned on being alone, at that hot period of the day. Her head was turned towards the sea, and she was moving gently up and down, without seeing me.

Nothing could be more surprising than that picture of the beautiful woman in the water, which was as clear as crystal, under a blaze of light. For she was a marvelously beautiful woman, tall, and modeled like a statue. She turned round, uttered a cry, and half swim-

ming, half walking, she went and hid altogether behind her rock; but as she must necessarily come out, I sat down on the beach and waited. Presently, she just showed her head, which was covered with thick black plaits. She had a rather large mouth, with full lips, large, bold eyes, and her skin, which was rather tanned by the climate, looked like a piece of old, hard, polished ivory.

She called out to me: "Go away!" and her full voice, which corresponded to her strong build, had a guttural accent, and as I did not move, she added: "It is not right of you to stop there, monsieur." I did not move, however, and her head disappeared. Ten minutes passed, and then her hair, then her forehead, and then her eyes reappeared, but slowly and prudently, as if she were playing at hide-and-seek, and were looking to see who was near. This time she was furious, and called out: "You will make me get some illness, and I shall not come out as long as you are there." Thereupon, I got up and went away, but not without looking round several times. When she thought I was far enough off, she came out of the water; bending down and turning her back to me, she disappeared in a cavity in the rock, behind a petticoat that was hanging up in front of it.

I went back the next day. She was bathing again, but she had a bathing costume, and she began to laugh, and showed her white teeth. A week later we were friends, and in another week we were eager lovers. Her name was Marroca, and she pronounced it as if there were a dozen *r's* in it. She was the daughter of Spanish colonists, and had married a Frenchman, whose name was Pontabeze. He was in government employ,

though I never exactly knew what his functions were. I found out that he was always very busy, and I did not care for anything else.

She then altered her time for having her bath, and came to my house every day, to have a siesta there. What a siesta! It could scarcely be called reposing! She was a splendid girl, of a somewhat animal, but superb type. Her eyes were always glowing with passion; her half-open mouth, her sharp teeth, and even her smiles, had something ferociously loving about them; and her curious, long and straight breasts, which were as pointed as if they had been pears of flesh, and as elastic as if they contained steel springs, gave her whole body something of the animal, made her a sort of inferior and magnificent being, a creature who was destined for unbridled love, and which roused in me the idea of those ancient deities, who gave expression to their tenderness on the grass and under the trees.

And then, her mind was as simple as two and two are four, and a sonorous laugh served her instead of thought.

Instinctively proud of her beauty, she hated the slightest covering, and ran and frisked about my house with daring and unconscious immodesty. When she was at last overcome and worn out by her cries and movements, she used to sleep soundly and peacefully while the overwhelming heat brought out minute spots of perspiration on her brown skin, and from under her arms.

Sometimes she returned in the evening, when her husband was on duty somewhere, and we used to lie on the terrace, scarcely covered by some fine, gauzy, Oriental fabric. When the full moon lit up the town and the

gulf, with its surrounding frame of hills, we saw on all the other terraces what looked like an army of silent phantoms lying, who would occasionally get up, change their places, and lie down again, in the languorous warmths of the starry sky.

But in spite of the brightness of African nights, Marroca would insist on stripping herself almost naked in the clear rays of the moon; she did not trouble herself much about anybody who might see us, and often, in spite of my fears and entreaties, she uttered long, resounding cries, which made the dogs in the distance howl.

One night, when I was sleeping under the starry sky, she came and knelt down on my carpet, and putting her lips, which curled slightly, close to my face, she said: "You must come and stay at my house." I did not understand her, and asked: "What do you mean?" "Yes, when my husband has gone away; you must come and be with me."

I could not help laughing, and said: "Why, as you come here?" And she went on almost talking into my mouth, sending her hot breath into my throat, and moistening my moustache with her lips: "I want it as a remembrance." Still I did not grasp her meaning; she put her arms round my neck. "When you are no longer here, I shall think of it."

I was touched and amused at the same time, and said: "You must be mad. I would much rather stop here."

As a matter of fact, I have no liking for assignations under the conjugal roof; they are mouse-traps, in which the unwary are always caught. But she begged and prayed, and even cried, and at last said: "You shall

see how I will love you there." Her wish seemed so strange that I could not explain it to myself; but on thinking it over, I thought I could discern a profound hatred for her husband, the secret vengeance of a woman who takes a pleasure in deceiving him, and who, moreover, wishes to deceive him in his own house.

"Is your husband very unkind to you?" I asked her. She looked vexed, and said: "Oh! No, he is very kind." "But you are not fond of him?" She looked at me with astonishment in her large eyes. "Indeed, I am very fond of him, very; but not so fond as I am of you."

I could not understand it all, and while I was trying to get at her meaning, she pressed one of those kisses, whose power she knew so well, onto my lips, and whispered: "But you will come, will you not?" I resisted, however, and so she got up immediately, and went away; nor did she come back for a week. On the eighth day she came back, stopped gravely at the door of my room, and said: "Are you coming to my house to-night? . . . If you refuse, I shall go away." Eight days is a very long time, my friend, and in Africa those eight days are as good as a month. "Yes," I said, and opened my arms, and she threw herself into them.

At night she waited for me in a neighboring street, and took me to their house, which was very small, and near the harbor. I first of all went through the kitchen, where they had their meals, and then into a very tidy, whitewashed room, with photographs on the walls, and paper flowers under a glass case. Marroca seemed beside herself with pleasure, and she jumped about, and

said: "There, you are at home, now." And I certainly acted as though I had been, though I felt rather embarrassed and somewhat uneasy.

Suddenly a loud knocking at the door made us start, and a man's voice called out: "Marroca, it is I." She started: "My husband! . . . Here, hide under the bed, quickly." I was distractedly looking for my overcoat, but she gave me a push, and panted out: "Come along, come along."

I lay down flat on my stomach, and crept under the bed without a word, while she went into the kitchen. I heard her open a cupboard, and then shut it again, and she came back into the room, carrying some object which I could not see, but which she quickly put down; and as her husband was getting impatient, she said, calmly: "I cannot find the matches." Then suddenly she added: "Oh! Here they are; I will come and let you in."

The man came in, and I could see nothing of him but his feet, which were enormous. If the rest of him was in proportion, he must have been a giant.

I heard kisses, a little pat on her naked flesh, and a laugh, and he said, in a strong Marseilles accent: "I forgot my purse, so I was obliged to come back; you were sound asleep, I suppose." He went to the cupboard, and was a long time in finding what he wanted; and as Marocca had thrown herself onto a bed, as if she were tired out, he went up to her, and no doubt tried to caress her, for she flung a volley of angry *r's* at him. His feet were so close to me that I felt a stupid, inexplicable longing to catch hold of them, but I restrained myself, and when he saw that he could not succeed in his wish, he got angry, and said: "You are not at all

nice, to-night. Good-bye." I heard another kiss, then the big feet turned, and I saw the nails in the soles of his shoes as he went into the next room, the front door was shut, and I was saved!

I came slowly out of my retreat, feeling rather humiliated, and while Marroca danced a jig round me, shouting with laughter, and clapping her hands, I threw myself heavily into a chair. But I jumped up with a bound, for I had sat down on something cold, and as I was no more dressed than my accomplice was, the contact made me start, and I looked round. I had sat down on a small axe, used for cutting wood, and as sharp as a knife. How had it got there? . . . I had certainly not seen it when I went in; but Marroca seeing me jump up, nearly choked with laughter, and coughed with both hands on her stomach.

I thought her amusement rather out of place; we had risked our lives stupidly, and I still felt a cold shiver down my back, and I was rather hurt at her foolish laughter. "Supposing your husband had seen me?" I said. "There was no danger of that," she replied. "What do you mean? . . . No danger? . . . That is a good joke! . . . If he had stooped down, he must have seen me."

She did not laugh any more; she only looked at me with her large eyes, which were bright with merriment. "He would not have stooped." "Why?" I persisted. "Just suppose that he had let his hat fall, he would have been sure to pick it up, and then. . . . I was well prepared to defend myself, in this costume!" She put her two strong, round arms about my neck, and, lowering her voice, as she did when she said: "I *adorre* you," she whispered: "Then he would *never*

have got up again." I did not understand her, and said: "What do you mean?"

She gave me a cunning wink, and put out her hand to the chair on which I had sat down, and her outstretched hands, her smile, her half-open lips, her white, sharp, and ferocious teeth, all drew my attention to the little axe which was used for cutting wood, whose sharp blade was glistening in the candle-light, and while she put out her hand as if she were going to take it, she put her left arm round me, and drawing me to her, and putting her lips against mine, with her right arm she made a motion as if she were cutting off the head of a kneeling man! . . .

This, my friend, is the manner in which people here understand conjugal duties, love, and hospitality!

AN ARTIFICE.

THE old doctor and his young patient were talking by the side of the fire. There was nothing the matter with her, except that she had one of those little feminine ailments from which pretty women frequently suffer; slight anæmia, nervous attack, and a suspicion of fatigue, of that fatigue from which newly married people often suffer at the end of the first month of their married life, when they have made a love match.

She was lying on the couch and talking. "No, doctor," she said; "I shall never be able to understand a woman deceiving her husband. Even allowing that she does not love him, that she pays no heed to her vows and promises, how can she give herself to another man? How can she conceal the intrigue from other people's eyes? How can it be possible to love amidst lies and treason?"

The doctor smiled, and replied: "It is perfectly easy, and I can assure you that a woman does not think of all those little subtle details, when she has made up her mind to go astray. I even feel certain that no woman is ripe for true love until she has passed through all the promiscuousness and all the loathsomeness of married life, which, according to an illustrious man, is nothing but an exchange of ill-tempered words by day, and disagreeable odors at night. Nothing is more true, for no woman can love passionately until after she has married.

"As for dissimulation, all women have plenty of it on hand on such occasions, and the simplest of them are wonderful, and extricate themselves from the greatest dilemmas in an extraordinary way."

The young woman, however, seemed incredulous. . . . "No, doctor," she said, "one never thinks until after it has happened, of what one ought to have done in a dangerous affair, and women are certainly more liable than men to lose their heads on such occasions." The doctor raised his hands. "After it has happened, you say! Now, I will tell you something that happened to one of my female patients, whom I always considered as an immaculate woman.

"It happened in a provincial town, and one night when I was sleeping profoundly, in that deep, first sleep from which it is so difficult to arouse us, it seemed to me, in my dreams, as if the bells in the town were sounding a fire alarm, and I woke up with a start. It was my own bell, which was ringing wildly, and as my footman did not seem to be answering the door, I, in turn, pulled the bell at the head of my bed, and soon I heard banging, and steps in the silent house, and then Jean came into my room, and handed me a letter which said: 'Madame Lelièvre begs Doctor Siméon to come to her immediately.'

"I thought for a few moments, and then I said to myself: 'A nervous attack, vapors, nonsense; I am too tired.' And so I replied: 'As Doctor Siméon is not at all well, he must beg Madame Lelièvre to be kind enough to call in his colleague, Monsieur Bonnet.' I put the note into an envelope, and went to sleep again, but about half an hour later the street bell rang again, and Jean came to me and said: 'There is somebody

downstairs; I do not quite know whether it is a man or a woman, as the individual is so wrapped up, who wishes to speak to you immediately. He says it is a matter of life and death for two people.' Whereupon, I sat up in bed and told him to show the person in.

"A kind of black phantom appeared, who raised her veil as soon as Jean had left the room. It was Madame Berthe Lelièvre, quite a young woman, who had been married for three years to a large shopkeeper in the town, who was said to have married the prettiest girl in the neighborhood.

"She was terribly pale, her face was contracted like the faces of mad people are, occasionally, and her hands trembled violently. Twice she tried to speak, without being able to utter a sound, but at last she stammered out: 'Come . . . quick . . . quick, Doctor. . . . Come . . . my . . . my lover has just died in my bedroom.' She stopped, half suffocated with emotion, and then went on: 'My husband will . . . be coming home from the club very soon.'

"I jumped out of bed, without even considering that I was only in my night-shirt, and dressed myself in a few moments, and then I said: 'Did you come a short time ago?' 'No,' she said, standing like a statue petrified with horror. 'It was my servant . . . she knows.' And then, after a short silence, she went on: 'I was there . . . by his side.' And she uttered a sort of cry of horror, and after a fit of choking, which made her gasp, she wept violently, and shook with spasmodic sobs for a minute or two. Then her tears suddenly ceased, as if by an internal fire, and with an air of tragic calmness, she said: 'Let us make haste.'

"I was ready, but I exclaimed: 'I quite forgot to order my carriage.' 'I have one,' she said; 'it is his, which was waiting for him!' She wrapped herself up, so as to completely conceal her face, and we started.

"When she was by my side in the darkness of the carriage, she suddenly seized my hand, and crushing it in her delicate fingers, she said, with a shaking voice, that proceeded from a distracted heart: 'Oh! If you only knew, if you only knew what I am suffering! I loved him, I have loved him distractedly, like a mad woman, for the last six months.' 'Is anyone up in your house?' I asked. 'No, nobody except Rose, who knows everything.'

"We stopped at the door, and evidently everybody was asleep, and we went in without making any noise, by means of her latch-key, and walked upstairs on tip-toe. The frightened servant was sitting on the top of the stairs, with a lighted candle by her side, as she was afraid to stop by the dead man, and I went into the room, which was turned upside down, as if there had been a struggle in it. The bed, which was tumbled and open, seemed to be waiting for somebody; one of the sheets was hanging onto the floor, and wet napkins, with which they had bathed the young man's temples, were lying on the floor, by the side of a wash-hand basin and a glass, while a strong smell of vinegar pervaded the room.

"The dead man's body was lying at full length in the middle of the room, and I went up to it, looked at it, and touched it. I opened the eyes, and felt the hands, and then, turning to the two women, who were shaking as if they were frozen, I said to them: 'Help me to carry him onto the bed.' When we had laid him

gently onto it, I listened to his heart, and put a looking-glass to his lips, and then said: 'It is all over; let us make haste and dress him.' It was a terrible sight!

"I took his limbs one by one, as if they had belonged to some enormous doll, and held them out to the clothes which the women brought, and they put on his socks, drawers, trousers, waistcoat, and lastly the coat, but it was a difficult matter to get the arms into the sleeves.

"When it came to buttoning his boots, the two women knelt down, while I held the light, but as his feet were rather swollen, it was very difficult, and as they could not find a button-hook, they had to use their hairpins. When the terrible toilet was over, I looked at our work, and said: 'You ought to arrange his hair a little.' The girl went and brought her mistress's large-toothed comb and brush, but as she was trembling, and pulling out his long, matted hair in doing it, Madame Lelièvre took the comb out of her hand, and arranged his hair as if she were caressing him. She parted it, brushed his beard, rolled his moustachios gently round her fingers, as she had no doubt been in the habit of doing, in the familiarities of their intrigue.

"Suddenly, however, letting go of his hair, she took her dead lover's inert head in her hands, and looked for a long time in despair at the dead face, which no longer could smile at her, and then, throwing herself onto him, she took him into her arms and kissed him ardently. Her kisses fell like blows onto his closed mouth and eyes, onto his forehead and temples, and then, putting her lips to his ear, as if he could still hear her, and as if she were about to whisper something to him, to make their embraces still more ardent, she said several times, in a heartrending voice: 'Adieu, my darling!'

" Just then the clock struck twelve, and I started up. 'Twelve o'clock!' I exclaimed. 'That is the time when the club closes. Come, Madame, we have not a moment to lose!' She started up, and I said: 'We must carry him into the drawing-room.' And when we had done this, I placed him on a sofa, and lit the chandeliers, and just then the front door was opened and shut noisily. He had come back, and I said: 'Rose, bring me the basin and the towels, and make the room look tidy. Make haste, for heaven's sake! Monsieur Lelièvre is coming in.'

" I heard his steps on the stairs, and then his hands feeling along the walls. 'Come here, my dear fellow,' I said, 'we have had an accident.'

" And the astonished husband appeared in the door with a cigar in his mouth, and said: 'What is the matter? What is the meaning of this?' 'My dear friend,' I said, going up to him; 'you find us in great embarrassment. I had remained late, chatting with your wife and our friend, who had brought me in his carriage, when he suddenly fainted, and in spite of all we have done, he has remained unconscious for two hours. I did not like to call in strangers, and if you will now help me downstairs with him, I shall be able to attend to him better at his own house.'

" The husband, who was surprised, but quite unsuspicious, took off his hat, and then he took his rival, who would be quite inoffensive for the future, under his arms. I got between his two legs, as if I had been a horse between the shafts, and we went downstairs, while his wife lighted us. When we got outside, I held the body up, so as to deceive the coachman, and said: 'Come, my friend; it is nothing; you feel better already,

I expect. Pluck up your courage, and make an attempt. It will soon be over.' But as I felt that he was slipping out of my hands, I gave him a slap on the shoulder, which sent him forward and made him fall into the carriage, and then I got in after him. Monsieur Lelièvre, who was rather alarmed, said to me: 'Do you think it is anything serious?' To which I replied, '*No,*' with a smile, as I looked at his wife, who had put her arm into that of her legitimate husband, and was trying to see into the carriage.

"I shook hands with them, and told my coachman to start, and during the whole drive the dead man kept falling against me. When we got to his house, I said that he had become unconscious on the way home, and helped to carry him upstairs, where I certified that he was dead, and acted another comedy to his distracted family, and at last I got back to bed, not without swearing at lovers."

The doctor ceased, though he was still smiling, and the young woman, who was in a very nervous state, said: "Why have you told me that terrible story?"

He gave her a gallant bow, and replied:

"So that I may offer you my services, if necessary."

THE ASSIGNATION.

ALTHOUGH she had her bonnet and jacket on, with a black veil over her face, and another in her pocket, which she would put on over the other as soon as she had got into the cab, she was beating the top of her little boot with the point of her parasol, and remained sitting in her room, without being able to make up her mind to keep this appointment.

And yet, how many times within the last two years had she dressed herself thus, when she knew that her husband would be on the Stock Exchange, in order to go to the bachelor chambers of her lover, the handsome Viscount de Martelet.

The clock behind her was ticking loudly, a book which she had half read through was lying open on a little rosewood writing-table between the windows, and a strong, sweet smell of violets from two bunches which were in a couple of Dresden china vases, mingled with a vague smell of verbena which came through the half-open door of her dressing-room.

The clock struck three, she rose up from her chair, she turned round to look at herself in the glass and smiled. "He is already waiting for me, and will be getting tired."

Then she left the room, told her footman that she would be back in an hour, at the latest — which was a lie; went downstairs and ventured into the street on foot.

It was towards the end of May, that delightful time

of the year, when the spring seems to be besieging Paris, and to conquer it over its roofs, invading the houses through their walls, and making it look gay, shedding brightness over its stone façades, the asphalt of its pavements, the stones on the roads, bathing it and intoxicating it with sap, like a forest putting on its spring verdure.

Madame Haggan went a few steps to the right, intending, as usual, to go along the Parade Provence, where she would hail a cab; but the soft air, that feeling of summer which penetrates our breast on some days, now took possession of her so suddenly that she changed her mind, and went down the Rue de la Chausée d'Antin, without knowing why, but vaguely attracted by a desire to see the trees in the *Square de la Trinité*.

"He may just wait ten minutes longer for me," she said to herself. And that idea pleased her also as she walked slowly through the crowd. She fancied that she saw him growing impatient, looking at the clock, opening the window, listening at the door, sitting down for a few moments, getting up again, and not daring to smoke, as she had forbidden him to do so when she was coming to him, and throwing despairing looks at his box of cigarettes.

She walked slowly, interested in what she saw, the shops and the people she met, walking slower and slower, and so little eager to get to her destination that she only sought for some pretext for stopping, and at the end of the street, in the little square, the verdure attracted her so much, that she went in, took a chair, and, sitting down, watched the hands of the clock as they moved.

Just then, the half hour struck, and her heart beat with pleasure when she heard the chimes. She had gained half-an-hour; then it would take her a quarter of an hour to reach the Rue Miromesnil, and a few minutes more in strolling along — an hour! a whole hour saved from her *rendez-vous!* She would not stop three-quarters of an hour, and that business would be finished once more.

Oh! she disliked going there! Just like a patient going to the dentist, so she had the intolerable recollection of all their past meetings, one a week on an average, for the last two years; and the thought that another was going to take place immediately made her shiver with misery from head to foot. Not that it was exactly painful, like a visit to the dentist, but it was wearisome, so wearisome, so complicated, so long, so unpleasant, that anything, even a visit to the dentist would have seemed preferable to her. She went on, however, but very slowly, stopping, sitting down, going hither and thither, but she went. Oh! how she would have liked to miss this meeting, but she had left the unhappy viscount in the lurch, twice following, during the last month, and she did not dare to do it again so soon. Why did she go to see him? Oh! why? Because she had acquired the habit of doing it, and had no reason to give poor Martelet when he wanted to know *the why!* Why had she begun it? Why? She did not know herself, any longer. Had she been in love with him? Very possibly! Not very much, but a little, a long time ago! He was very nice, sought after, perfectly dressed, most courteous, and after the first glance, he was a perfect lover for a fashionable woman. He had courted her for three months — the normal

period, an honorable strife and sufficient resistances — and then she had consented, and with what emotion, what nervousness, what terrible, delightful fear, and that first meeting in his small, ground-floor bachelor rooms, in the Rue de Miromesnil. Her heart? What did her little heart of a woman who had been seduced, vanquished, conquered, feel when she for the first time entered the door of that house which was her nightmare? She really did not know! She had quite forgotten. One remembers a fact, a date, a thing, but one hardly remembers, after the lapse of two years, what an emotion, which soon vanished, because it was very slight, was like. But, oh! she had certainly not forgotten the others, that rosary of meetings, that road to the cross of love, and those stations, which were so monotonous, so fatiguing, so similar to each other, that she felt a nauseating taste in her mouth at what was going to happen so soon.

And the very cabs were not like the other cabs which one makes use of for ordinary purposes! Certainly, the cabmen guessed. She felt sure of it, by the very way they looked at her, and the eyes of these Paris cabmen are terrible! When one remembers they are constantly remembering, in the Courts of Justices, after a lapse of several years, faces of criminals whom they have only driven once, in the middle of the night, from some street or other to a railway station, and that they have to do with almost as many passengers as there are hours in the day, and that their memory is good enough for them to declare: "That is the man whom I took up in the Rues des Martyrs, and put down at the Lyons Railway Station, at 12 o'clock at night, on July 10, last year!" Is it not terrible when one risks what a young

woman risks when she is going to meet her lover, and has to trust her reputation to the first cabman she meets? In two years she had employed at least a hundred to a hundred and twenty in that drive to the Rue Miromesnil, reckoning only one a week, and they were so many witnesses, who might appear against her at a critical moment.

As soon as she was in the cab, she took another veil, which was as thick and dark as a domino mask, out of her pocket, and put it on. That hid her face, but what about the rest, her dress, her bonnet, and her parasol? They might be remarked; they might, in fact, have been seen already. Oh! What misery she endured in this Rue de Miromesnil! She thought that she recognized all the foot-passengers, the servants, everybody, and almost before the cab had stopped, she jumped out and ran past the porter who was standing outside his lodge. He must know everything, everything! — her address, her name, her husband's profession — everything, for those porters are the most cunning of policemen! For two years she had intended to bribe him, to give him (to throw at him one day as she passed him) a hundred-franc bank-note, but she had never once dared to do it. She was frightened! What of? She did not know! Of his calling her back, if he did not understand? Of a scandal? Of a crowd on the stairs? Of being arrested, perhaps? To reach the Viscount's door, she had only to ascend a half a flight of stairs, and it seemed to her as high as the tower of Saint Jacques' Church.

As soon as she had reached the vestibule, she felt as if she were caught in a trap, and the slightest noise before or behind her, nearly made her faint. It was

impossible for her to go back, because of that porter who barred her retreat; and if anyone came down at that moment she would not dare to ring at Martelet's door, but would pass it as if she had been going elsewhere! She would have gone up, and up, and up! She would have mounted forty flights of stairs! Then, when everything would seem quiet again down below, she would run down, feeling terribly frightened, lest she would not recognize the lobby.

He was there in a velvet coat lined with silk, very stylish, but rather ridiculous, and for two years he had never altered his manner of receiving her, not in a single movement! As soon as he had shut the door, he used to say this: "Let me kiss your hands, my dear, dear friend!" Then he followed her into the room, when with closed shutters and lighted candles, out of refinement, no doubt, he knelt down before her and looked at her from head to foot with an air of adoration. On the first occasion that had been very nice and very successful; but now it seemed to her as if she saw Monsieur Delauney acting the last scene of a successful piece for the hundred and twentieth time. He might really change his manner of acting. But no, he never altered his manner of acting, poor fellow. What a good fellow he was, but very commonplace! . . .

And how difficult it was to undress and dress without a lady's maid! Perhaps that was the moment when she began to take a dislike to him. When he said: "Do you want me to help you?" she could have killed him. Certainly there were not many men as awkward as he was, or as uninteresting. Certainly, little Baron de Isombal would never have asked her in such a manner: "Do you want me to help you?" He would

have helped her, he was so witty, so funny, so active. But there! He was a diplomatist, he had been about in the world, and had roamed everywhere, and, no doubt, dressed and undressed women who were arrayed in every possible fashion! . . .

The church clock struck the three-quarters, and she looked at the dial, and said: "Oh, how agitated he will be!" and then she quickly left the square; but she had not taken a dozen steps outside, when she found herself face to face with a gentleman who bowed profoundly to her.

"Why! Is that you, Baron?" she said, in surprise. She had just been thinking of him.

"Yes, Madame." And then, after asking how she was, and a few vague words, he continued: "Do you know that you are the only one — you will allow me to say of my lady friends, I hope? who has not yet seen my Japanese collection."

"But my dear Baron, a lady cannot go to a bachelor's room like this."

"What do you mean? That is a great mistake, when it is a question of seeing a rare collection!"

"At any rate, she cannot go alone."

"And why not? I have received a number of ladies alone, only for the sake of seeing my collection! They come every day. Shall I tell you their names? No — I will not do that; one must be discreet, even when one it not guilty; as a matter of fact, there is nothing improper in going to the house of a well-known serious man who holds a certain position, unless one goes for an unavoidable reason!"

"Well, what you have said is certainly correct, at bottom."

"So you will come and see my collection?"

"When?"

"Well, now, immediately."

"Impossible; I am in a hurry."

"Nonsense, you have been sitting in the square for this last half hour."

"You were watching me?"

"I was looking at you."

"But I am sadly in a hurry."

"I am sure you are not. Confess that you are in no particular hurry."

Madame Haggan began to laugh, and said: "Well, . . . no . . . not . . . very. . . ."

"A cab passed close to them, and the little Baron called out: "Cabman!" and the vehicle stopped, and opening the door, he said: "Get in, Madame."

"But, Baron! no, it is impossible to-day; I really cannot."

"Madame, you are acting very imprudently; get in! people are beginning to look at us, and you will collect a crowd; they will think I am trying to carry you off, and we shall both be arrested; please get in!"

She got in, frightened and bewildered, and he sat down by her side, saying to the cabman: "Rue de Provence."

But suddenly she exclaimed: "Good heavens! I have forgotten a very important telegram; please drive to the nearest telegraph office first of all."

The cab stopped a little farther on, in the Rue de Châteaudun, and she said to the Baron: "Would you kindly get me a fifty centimes telegraph form? I promised my husband to invite Martelet to dinner to-morrow, and had quite forgotten it."

When the Baron returned and gave her the blue telegraph form, she wrote in pencil:

"My Dear Friend: I am not at all well. I am suffering terribly from neuralgia, which keeps me in bed. Impossible to go out. Come and dine to-morrow night, so that I may obtain my pardon.

"JEANNE."

She wetted the gum, fastened it carefully, and addressed it to: "Viscount de Martelet, 240 Rue Miromesnil," and then, giving it back to the Baron, she said: "Now, will you be kind enough to throw this into the telegram box."

AN ADVENTURE

"COME! Come!" Pierre Dufaille said, shrugging his shoulders. "What are you talking about, when you say that there are no more adventures? Say that there are no more adventurous men, and you will be right! Yes, nobody ventures to trust to chance, in these days, for as soon as there is any slight mystery, or a spice of danger, they draw back. If, however, a man is willing to go into them blindly, and to run the risk of anything that may happen, he can still meet with adventures, and even I, who never look for them, met with one in my life, and a very startling one; let me tell you.

"I was staying in Florence, and was living very quietly, and all I indulged in, in the way of adventures, was to listen occasionally to the immoral proposals with which every stranger is beset at night on the *Piazzo de la Signoria,* by some worthy Pandarus or other, with a head like that of a venerable priest. These excellent fellows generally introduce you to their families, where debauchery is carried on in a very simple, and almost patriarchal fashion, and where one does not run the slightest risk.

"One day as I was admiring Benvenuto Cellini's wonderful Perseus, in front of the *Loggia dei Lanzi,* I suddenly felt my sleeve pulled somewhat roughly, and on turning round, I found myself face to face with a woman of about fifty, who said to me with a strong German accent: 'You are French, Monsieur, are you

not?' 'Certainly, I am,' I replied. 'And would you like to go home with a very pretty woman?'

"'Most certainly I should,' I replied, with a laugh.

"Nothing could have been funnier than the looks and the serious air of the procuress, or than the strangeness of the proposal, made to broad daylight, and in very bad French, but it was even worse when she added: 'Do you know everything they do in Paris?' 'What do you mean, my good woman?' I asked her, rather startled. 'What is done in Paris, that is not done everywhere else?'

"However, when she explained her meaning, I replied that I certainly could not, and as I was not quite so immodest as the lady, I blushed a little. But not for long, for almost immediately afterwards I grew pale, when she said: 'I want to assure myself of it, personally.' And she said this in the same phlegmatic manner, which did not seem so funny to me now, but, on the contrary, rather frightened me. 'What!' I said. 'Personally! You! Explain yourself!'

"If I had been rather surprised before, I was altogether astonished at her explanation. It was indeed an adventure, and was almost like a romance. I could scarcely believe my ears, but this is what she told me.

"She was the confidential attendant on a lady moving in high society, who wished to be initiated into the most secret refinements of Parisian high life, and who had done me the honor of choosing me for her companion. But then, this preliminary test! 'By Jove!' I said to myself, 'this old German hag is not so stupid as she looks!' And I laughed in my sleeve, as I listened inattentively to what she was saying to persuade me.

"'My mistress is the prettiest woman you can dream of; a real beauty; springtime! A flower!' 'You must excuse me, but if your mistress is really like springtime and a flower, you (pray excuse me for being so blunt) are not exactly that, and perhaps I should not exactly be in a mood to humor you, my dear lady, in the same way that I might her.'

"She jumped back, astonished in turn: 'Why, I only want to satisfy myself with my own eyes; not by injuring you.' And she finished her explanation, which had been incomplete before. All she had to do was to go with me to *Mother Patata's* well-known establishment, and there to be present while I conversed with one of its fair and frail inhabitants.

"'Oh!' I said to myself, 'I was mistaken in her tastes. She is, of course, an old, shriveled up woman, as I guessed, but she is a specialist. This is interesting, upon my word! I never met with such a one before!'

"Here, gentlemen, I must beg you to allow me to hide my face for a moment. What I said was evidently not strictly correct, and I am rather ashamed of it; my excuse must be that I was young, that *Patata's* was a celebrated place, of which I had heard wonderful things said, but the entry to which was barred me, on account of my small means. Five napoleons was the price! Fancy! I could not treat myself to it, and so I accepted the good lady's offer. I do not say that it was not disagreeable, but what was I to do? And then, the old woman was a German, and so her five napoleons were a slight return for our five milliards, which we paid them as our war indemnity.

"Well, *Patata's* boarder was charming, the old woman was not too troublesome, and your humble serv-

ant did his best to sustain the ancient glory of Frenchmen.

"Let me drink my disgrace to the dregs! On the next day but one after, I was waiting at the statue of Perseus. It was shameful, I confess, but I enjoyed the partial restitution of the five milliards, and it is surprising how a Frenchman loses his dignity, when he is traveling.

"The good lady made her appearance at the appointed time. It was quite dark, and I followed her without a word, for, after all, I was not very proud of the part I was playing. But if you only knew how fair that little girl at *Patata's* was! As I went along, I thought only of her, and did not pay any attention to where we were going, and I was only roused from my reverie by hearing the old woman say: 'Here we are. Try and be as entertaining as you were the day before yesterday.'

"We were not outside *Patata's* house, but in a narrow street running by the side of a palace with high walls, and in front of us was a small door, which the old woman opened gently.

"For a moment I felt inclined to draw back. Apparently the old hag was also ardent on her own account! She had me in a trap! No doubt she wanted in her turn to make use of my small talents! But, no! That was impossible!

"'Go in! Go in!' she said. 'What are you afraid of? My mistress is so pretty, so pretty, much prettier than the little girl of the other day.' So it was really true, this story out of *The Arabian Nights?* Why not? And after all, what was I risking? The good

woman would certainly not injure me, and so I went in, though somewhat nervously.

"Oh! My friend, what an hour I spent then! Paradise! and it would be useless, impossible to describe it to you! Apartments fit for a princess, and one of those princesses out of fairy tales, a fairy herself. An exquisite German woman, exquisite as German women can be, when they try. An Undine of Heinrich Heine's, with hair like the Virgin Mary's, innocent blue eyes, and a skin like strawberries and cream.

"Suddenly, however, my Undine got up, and her face convulsed with fury and pride. Then, she rushed behind some hangings, where she began to give vent to a flood of German words, which I did not understand, while I remained standing, dumbfounded. But just then, the old woman came in, and said, shaking with fear: 'Quick, quick; dress yourself and go, if you do not wish to be killed.'

"I asked no questions, for what was the good of trying to understand? Besides, the old woman, who grew more and more terrified, could not find any French words, and chattered wildly. I jumped up and got into my shoes and overcoat and ran down the stairs, and in the street.

"Ten minutes later, I recovered my breath and my senses, without knowing what streets I had been through, nor where I had come from, and I stole furtively into my hotel, as if I had been a malefactor.

"In the *cafés* the next morning, nothing was talked of except a crime that had been committed during the night. A German baron had killed his wife with a revolver, but he had been liberated on bail, as he had

appealed to his counsel, to whom he had given the following explanation, to the truth of which the lady companion of the baroness had certified.

"She had been married to her husband almost by force, and detested him, and she had some particular reasons (which were not specified) for her hatred of him. In order to have her revenge on him, she had had him seized, bound and gagged by four hired ruffians, who had been caught, and who had confessed everything. Thus, reduced to immobility, and unable to help himself, the baron had been obliged to witness a degrading scene, where his wife caressed a Frenchman, and thus outraged conjugal fidelity and German honor at the same time. As soon as he was set at liberty, the baron had punished his faithless wife, and was now seeking her accomplice."

"And what did you do?" some one asked Pierre Dufaille.

"The only thing I could do, by George!" he replied. "I put myself at the poor devil's disposal; it was his right, and so we fought a duel. Alas! It was with swords, and he ran me right through the body. That was also his right, but he exceeded his right when he called me her *ponce*. Then I gave him his chance and as I fell, I called out with all the strength that remained to me: 'A Frenchman! A Frenchman Long live France!'"

THE DOUBLE PINS

"AH; my dear fellow, what jades women are!"

"What makes you say that?"

"Because they have played me an abominable trick."

"You?"

"Yes, me."

"Women, or a woman?"

"Two women."

"Two women at once?"

"Yes."

"What was the trick?"

The two young men were sitting outside a *café* on the Boulevards, and drinking liquors mixed with water, those aperients which look like infusions of all the shades in a box of water-colors. They were nearly the same age, twenty-five to thirty. One was dark and the other fair, and they had the same semi-elegant look of stock-jobbers, of men who go to the Stock Exchange, and into drawing-rooms, who are to be seen everywhere, who live everywhere, and love everywhere. The dark one continued.

"I have told you of my connection with that little woman, a tradesman's wife, whom I met on the beach at Dieppe?"

"Yes."

"My dear fellow, you know what it is. I had a mistress in Paris, whom I loved dearly; an old friend, a

good friend, and it has grown into a habit, in fact, and I value it very much."

"Your habit."

"Yes, my habit, and hers also. She is married to an excellent man, whom I also value very much, a very cordial fellow. A capital companion! I may say, I think that my life is bound up with that house."

"Well?"

"Well! they could not manage to leave Paris, and I found myself a widower at Dieppe."

"Why did you go to Dieppe?"

"For change of air. One cannot remain on the Boulevards the whole time."

"And then?"

"Then I met the little woman I mentioned to you on the beach there."

"The wife of that head of the public office?"

"Yes: she was dreadfully dull; her husband only came every Sunday, and he is horrible! I understand her perfectly, and we laughed and danced together."

"And the rest?"

"Yes, but that came later. However, we met, we liked each other. I told her I liked her, and she made me repeat it, so that she might understand it better, and she put no obstacles in my way."

"Did you love her?"

"Yes, a little; she is very nice."

"And what about the other?"

"The other was in Paris! Well, for six weeks it was very pleasant, and we returned here on the best of terms. Do you know how to break with a woman, when that woman has not wronged you in any way?"

"Yes, perfectly well."

"How do you manage it?"

"I give her up."

"How do you do it?"

"I do not see her any longer."

"But supposing she comes to you?"

"I am . . . not at home."

"And if she comes again?"

"I say I am not well."

"If she looks after you?"

"I play her some dirty trick."

"And if she puts up with it?"

"I write to her husband anonymous letters, so that he may look after her on the days that I expect her."

"That is serious! I cannot resist, and do not know how to bring about a rupture, and so I have a collection of mistresses. There are some whom I do not see more than once a year, others every ten months, others on those days when they want to dine at a restaurant, those whom I have put at regular intervals do not worry me, but I often have great difficulty with the fresh ones, so as to keep them at proper intervals."

"And then. . . ."

"And then . . . Then, this little woman was all fire and flame, without any fault of mine, as I told you! As her husband spends all the whole day at his office, she began to come to me unexpectedly, and twice she nearly met my regular one on the stairs."

"The devil!"

"Yes; so I gave each of them her days, regular days, to avoid confusion; Saturday and Monday for the old one, Tuesday, Friday and Sunday for the new one."

"Why did you show her the preference?"

"Ah! My dear friend, she is younger."

"So that only gave you two days to yourself in a week."

"That is enough for one."

"Allow me to compliment you on that."

"Well, just fancy that the most ridiculous and most annoying thing in the world happened to me. For four months everything had been going on perfectly; I felt perfectly safe, and I was really very happy, when suddenly, last Monday, the crash came.

"I was expecting my regular one at the usual time, a quarter past one, and was smoking a good cigar, and dreaming, very well satisfied with myself, when I suddenly saw that it was past the time, at which I was much surprised, for she is very punctual, but I thought that something might have accidentally delayed her. However, half-an-hour passed, then an hour, an hour and a half, and then I knew that something must have detained her; a sick headache, perhaps, or some annoying visitor. That sort of waiting is very vexatious, that . . . useless waiting . . . very annoying and enervating. At last, I made up my mind to go out, and not knowing what to do, I went to her and found her reading a novel."

"Well!" I said to her. And she replied quite calmly:

"My dear I could not come; I was hindered."

"How?"

"My . . . something else."

"What was it?

"A very annoying visit."

"I saw that she would not tell me the true reason, and as she was very calm, I did not trouble myself any more about it, and hoped to make up for lost time with

the other, the next day, and on the Tuesday, I was very . . . very excited, and amorous in expectation of the public official's little wife, and I was surprised that she had not come before the appointed time, and I looked at the clock every moment, and watched the hands impatiently, but the quarter past, then the half-hour, then two o'clock. I could not sit still any longer, and walked up and down very soon in great strides, putting my face against the window, and my ears to the door, to listen whether she was not coming upstairs."

"Half-past two, three o'clock! I seized my hat, and rushed to her house. She was reading a novel my dear fellow! 'Well!' I said, anxiously, and she replied as calmly as usual: 'I was hindered, and could not come.'

"'By what?'

"'An annoying visit.'

"Of course, I immediately thought that they both knew everything, but she seemed so calm and quiet, that I set aside my suspicions, and thought it was only some strange coincidence, as I could not believe in such dissimulation on her part, and so, after half-an-hour's friendly talk, which was, however, interrupted a dozen times by her little girl coming in and out of the room. I went away, very much annoyed. Just imagine the next day. . . ."

"The same thing happened?"

"Yes, and the next also. And that went on for three weeks without any explanation, without anything explaining that strange conduct to me, the secret of which I suspected, however."

"They knew everything?"

"I should think so, by George. But how? Ah!

I had a great deal of anxiety before I found it out."

"How did you manage it at last?"

"From their letters, for on the same day they both gave me their dismissal in identical terms."

"Well?"

"This is how it was. . . . You know that women always have an array of pins about them. I know hairpins, I doubt them, and look after them, but the others are much more treacherous; those confounded little black-headed pins which look all alike to us, great fools that we are, but which they can distinguish, just as we can distinguish a horse from a dog.

"Well, it appears that one day my minister's little wife left one of those tell-tale instruments pinned to the paper, close to my looking-glass. My usual one had immediately seen this little black speck, no bigger than a flea, and had taken it out without saying a word, and then had left one of her pins, which was also black, but of a different pattern, in the same place.

"The next day, the minister's wife wished to recover her property, and immediately recognized the substitution. Then her suspicions were aroused, and she put in two and crossed them, and my original one replied to this telegraphic signal by three black pellets, one on the top of the other, and as soon as this method had begun, they continued to communicate with one another, without saying a word, only to spy on each other. Then it appears that the regular one, being bolder, wrapped a tiny piece of paper round the little wire point, and wrote upon it: *C. D., Poste Restante, Boulevards, Malherbes.*

"Then they wrote to each other. You understand that was not everything that passed between them.

"I see them as friends, for we have not quarreled altogether."

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They set to work with precaution, with a thousand stratagems, with all the prudence that is necessary in such cases, but the regular one did a bold stroke, and made an appointment with the other. I do not know what they said to each other; all that I know is, that I had to pay the costs of their interview. There you have it all!"

"Is that all?"

"Yes."

"And you do not see them any more?"

"I beg your pardon. I see them as friends, for we have not quarreled altogether."

"And have they met again?"

"Yes, my dear fellow, they have become intimate friends."

"And has not that given you an idea?"

"No, what idea?"

"You great booby! The idea of making them put back the pins where they found them."

AS he was a man of quiet and regular habits, and of a simple and affectionate disposition, and had nothing to disturb the even tenor of his life, Monsieur de Loubancourt suffered more than most men do from his widowerhood. He regretted his lost happiness, was angry with fate, which separated united couples so brutally, and which made choice of a tranquil existence, whose sleepy quietude had not hitherto been troubled by any cares or chimeras, in order to rob it of its happiness.

Had he been younger, he might, perhaps, have been tempted to form a new line, to fill up the vacant place, and to marry again. But when a man is nearly sixty, such ideas make people laugh, for they have something ridiculous and insane about them; and so he dragged on his dull and weary existence, escaped from all those familiar objects which constantly recalled the past to him, and went from hotel to hotel without taking an interest in anything, without becoming intimate with anyone, even temporarily; inconsolable, silent, almost enigmatical, and looking funereal in his eternal black clothes.

He was generally alone, though on rare occasions he was accompanied by his only son, who used to yawn by stealth, and who seemed to be mentally counting the hours, as if he were performing some hateful, enforced duty in spite of himself.

Two years of this crystallization went past, and one

was as monotonous, and as void of incident, as the other.

One evening, however, in a boarding-house at Cannes, where he was staying on his wanderings, there was a young woman dressed in mourning, among the new arrivals, who sat next to him at dinner. She had a sad, pale face, that told of suffering, a beautiful figure, and large, blue eyes with deep rings round them, but which, nevertheless, looked like the first star which shines in the twilight.

All remarked her, although he usually took no notice of women, no matter whatever they were, ugly or pretty; he looked at her and listened to her. He felt less lonely by her side, though he did not know why. He trembled with instinctive and confused happiness, just as if in some distant country he had found some female friend or relative, who at last would understand him, tell him some news, and talk to him in his dear native language about everything that a man leaves behind him when he exiles himself from home.

What strange affinity had thrown them together thus? What secret forces had brought their grief in contact? What made him so sanguine and so calm, and incited him to take her suddenly into his confidences, and urged him on to resistless curiosity?

She was an experienced traveler, who had no illusions, and was in search of adventures; one of those women who frequently change their name, and who, as they have made up their minds to swindle if luck is not on their side, act a continual part, an adventuress, who could put on every accent; who for the sake of her course, transformed herself into a Slav, or into an American, or simply into a provincial; who was ready to take part in any comedy in order to make money, and

not to be obliged to waste her strength and her brains on fruitless struggles or on wretched expedients. Thus she immediately guessed the state of this melancholy sexagenarian's mind, and the illusions which attracted him to her, and scented the spoils which offered themselves to her cupidity of their own accord, and divined under what guise she ought to show herself, to make herself accepted and loved.

She initiated him into depths of grief which were unknown to him, by phrases which were cut short by sighs, by fragments of her story, which she finished by a disgusted shrug of the shoulders, and a heartrending smile, and by insensibly exciting his feelings. In a word, she triumphed over the last remaining doubts, which might still have mingled with the affectionate pity with which that poor, solitary heart, which, so full of bitterness, overflowed.

And so, for the first time since he had become a widower, the old man confided in another person, poured out his old heart into that soul which seemed to be so like his own, which seemed to offer him a refuge where he could be cheered up, and where the wounds of his heart could be healed, and he longed to throw himself into those sisterly arms, to dry his tears and to exercise his grief there.

. . . . . .

Monsieur de Loubancourt, who had married at twenty-five, as much from love as from judgment, had lived quietly and peacefully in the country, much more than in Paris. He was ignorant of the female wiles of temptations, offered to creatures like Wanda Pulska, who was made up of lies, and only cared for pleasure, a virgin soil on which any seed will grow.

She attached herself to him, became his shadow, and by degrees, part of his life. She showed herself to be a charitable woman who devoted herself to an unhappy man, who endeavored to console him, and who, in spite of her youth, was willing to be the inseparable companion of the old man in his slow, daily walks. She never appeared to tire of his anecdotes and reminiscences, and she played cards with him. She waited on him carefully when he was confined to his bed, appeared to have no sex, and transformed herself; and though she handled him skillfully, she seemed ingenuous and ignorant of evil. She acted like an innocent young girl, who had just been confirmed; but for all that, she chose dangerous hours and certain spots in which to be sentimental and to ask questions which agitated and disconcerted him, and abandoned her slender fingers to his feverish hands, which pressed and held them in a tender clasp.

And then, there were wild declarations of love, prayers and sobs which frightened her; wild *adieux,* which were not followed by his departure, but which brought about a touching reconciliation and the first kiss, and then, one night, while they were traveling together, he forced open the door of her bedroom at the hotel, which she had locked, and came in like a mad man. There was the phantom of violence, and the fallacious submission of a woman, who was overcome by so much tenderness, who rebelled no longer, but who accepted the yoke of her master and lover. And then, the conquest of the body after the conquest of the heart, which forged his chain link by link, pleasures which besot and corrupt old men, and dry up their brains, until at last

he allowed himself to be induced, almost unconsciously, to make an odious and stupid will.

Informed, perhaps, by anonymous letters, or astonished because his father kept him altogether at a distance from him, and gave no signs of life, Monsieur de Loubancourt's son joined them in Provence. But Wanda Pulska, who had been preparing for that attack for a long time, waited for it fearlessly.

She did not seem disconcerted at that sudden visit, but was very charming and affable towards the new comer, reassured him by her careless airs of a girl, who took life as it came, and who was suffering from the consequences of a fault, and did not trouble her head about the future.

He envied his father, and grudged him such a treasure. Although he had come to combat her dangerous influence, and to treat the woman, who had assumed the place of death, and who governed her lover as his sovereign mistress, as an enemy, he shrunk from his task, panted with desire, lost his head, and thought of nothing but treason and of an odious partnership.

She managed him even more easily than she had managed Monsieur de Loubancourt, molded him just as she chose; made him her tool, without even giving him the tips of her fingers, or granting him the slightest favor, induced him to be so imprudent, that the old man grew jealous, watched them, discovered the intrigue, and found mad letters in which his son was angry, begged, threatened and implored.

One evening, when she knew that her lover had come in, and was hiding in a dark cupboard in order to watch them, Wanda happened to be alone in the drawing-room, which was full of light, of beautiful

flowers, with this young fellow, five-and-twenty. He threw himself at her feet and declared his love, and besought her to run away with him, and when she tried to bring him to reason and repulsed him, and told him in a loud and very distinct voice, how she loved Monsieur de Loubancourt, he seized her wrists with brutal violence, and maddened with passion and stammering words of love and lust, he pushed her towards one of the couches.

"Let me go," she said, "let me go immediately, . . . You are a brute to take advantage of a woman like that. . . . Please let me go, or I shall call the servants to my assistance."

The next moment, the old man, terrible in his rage, rushed out of his hiding place with clenched fists and a slobbering mouth, threw himself on the startled son, and pointing to the door with a superb gesture, he said:

"You are a dirty scoundrel, sir. Get out of my house immediately, and never let me see you again!"

. . . . . .

The comedy was over. Grateful for such fidelity and real affection, Monsieur de Loubancourt married Wanda Pulska, whose name appeared on the civil register — which was a detail of no importance to a man who was in love — as Frida Krubstein; she came from Saxony, and had been a servant at an inn. Then he disinherited his son, as far as he could.[1]

And now that she is a respectable and respected widow, Madame de Loubancourt is received every-

[1] According to French law, nobody can altogether disinherit a child, and no son or daughter can be "cut off" with a "proverbial shilling."

where by society in those places of winter resort where people's by-gone history is so rarely gone into, and where women bear a name, who are pretty, and who can waltz — like the Germans can, are always well received.

THE REAL ONE AND THE OTHER

"WELL, really," Chasseval said, standing with his back to the fire, "could any of those respectable shopkeepers and wine growers have possibly believed that that pretty little Parisian woman, with her soft innocent eyes, like those of a Madonna, with such smiling lips and golden hair, and who always dressed so simple, was their candidate's mistress?"

She was a wonderful help to him, and accompanied him even to the most outlying farms; went to the meetings in the small village *cafés* and had a pleasant and suitable word for every one, and did not recoil at a glass of mulled wine or a grip of the hand, and was always ready to join in *farandole*.[1] She seemed to be so in love with Eliénne Rulhière, to trust him so entirely, to be so proud of forming half of his life, and of belonging to him, gave him such looks full of pleasure and of hope, and listened to all he said so intently, that voters who might have hesitated, allowed themselves by degrees to be talked over and persuaded; and promised their votes to the young doctor, whose name they never heard mentioned in the district before.

That electoral campaign had been like a truant's escapade for Jane Dardenne; it was a delightful and unexpected holiday, and as she was an actress at heart, she played her part seriously, and threw herself into

[1] A dance in Provence in which the dancers form a chain, and the movements are directed by the leader.— TRANSLATOR.

her character, and enjoyed herself more than she ever enjoyed herself in her most adventurous outings.

And then there came in the pleasure of being taken for a woman of the world, of being flattered, respected and envied, and of getting out of the usual groove for a time, and also the dream that this journey of a few weeks would have the sequence, that her lover would not separate from her on their return, but would sacrifice the woman whom he no longer loved, and whom he ironically used to call his *Cinderella,* to her.

At night, when they had laid aside all pretense, and when they were alone in their room in the hotel, she coaxed him and flattered him, spurred his ambition on, threw her quivering arms around him, and amidst her kisses, whispered those words to him, which make a man proud and warm his heart, and give him strength, like a stout dram of alcohol.

The two between them captured the district, and won the election easily, and in spite of his youth, Eliénne Rulhière was chosen by a majority of five thousand. Then, of course, there were more fetes and banquets, at which Jane was present, and where she was received with enthusiastic shouts; there were fireworks, when she was obliged to set light to the first rocket, and balls at which she astonished those worthy people by her affability. And when they left, three little girls dressed in white, as if they were going to be confirmed, came onto the platform and recited some complimentary verses to her while the band played the *Marseillaise,* the women waved their pocket-handkerchiefs, and the men their hats, and leaning out of the carriage window, looking charming in her traveling costume, with a smile

She coaxed him, and flattered him.

on her lips, and with moist eyes, as was fitting at such a pathetic leave-taking, actress as she was, with a sudden and childlike gesture, she blew kisses to them from the tips of her fingers, and said:

"Good-bye, my friends, good-bye, only for the present; I shall never forget you!"

The deputy, who was also very effusive, had invited his principal supporters to come and see him in Paris as there were plenty of excursion trains. They all took him at his word, and Rulhière was obliged to invite them all to dinner.

In order to avoid any possible mishaps, he gave his wife a foretaste of their guests. He told her that they were rather noisy, talkative, and unpolished, and that they would, no doubt, astonish her by their manners and their accent, but that, as they had great influence, and were excellent men, they deserved a good reception. It was a very useful precaution, for when they came into the drawing-room in their new clothes, expanding with pleasure, and with their hair pomatumed as if they had been going to a country wedding, they felt inclined to fall down before the new Madame Rulhière to whom the deputy introduced them, and who seemed to be perfectly at home there.

At first they were embarrassed, felt uncomfortable and out of place, did not know what to say, and had to seek their words; they buttoned and unbuttoned their gloves, answered her questions at random, and racked their brains to discover the solution of the enigma. Captain Mouredus looked at the fire, with the fixed gaze of a somnambulist, Marius Barbaste scratched his fingers mechanically, while the three others, the factory manager, Casemajel, Roquetton, the lawyer, and

Dustugue, the hotel proprietor, looked at Rulhière anxiously.

The lawyer was the first to recover himself. He got up from his arm chair laughing heartily, dug the deputy in the ribs with his elbow, and said:

"I understand it all, I understand it; you thought that people do not come to Paris to be bored, eh? Madame is delightful, and I congratulate you, Monsieur."

He gave a wink, and made signs behind his back to his friends, and then the captain had his turn.

"We are not boobies, and that fellow Roquetton is the most knowing of the lot of us. . . . Ah! Monsieur Rulhière, without any exaggeration, you are the cream of good fellows."

And with a flushed face, and expanding his chest, he said sonorously:

"They certainly turn them out very pretty in your part of the country, my little lady!"

Madame Rulhière, who did not know what to say, had gone up to her husband for protection; but she felt much inclined to go to her own room under some pretext or other, in order to escape from her intolerable task. She kept her ground, however, during the whole of dinner, which was a noisy, jovial meal, during which the five electors, with their elbows on the table, and their waistcoats unbuttoned, and half drunk, told coarse stories, and swore like troopers. But as the coffee and the liquors were served in the smoking room, she took leave of her guests in an impatient voice, and went to her own room with the hasty step of an escaped prisoner, who is afraid of being retaken.

The electors sat staring after her with gaping mouths, and Mouredus lit a cigar, and said:

"Just listen to me, Monsieur Rulhière; it was very kind of you to invite us here, to your little quiet establishment, but to speak to you frankly, I should not, in your place, wrong my lawful wife for such a stuck-up piece of goods as this one is."

"The captain is quite right," Roquetton the notary opined; Madame Rulhière, the lawful Madame Rulhière, is much more amiable, and altogether nicer. You are a scoundrel to deceive her; but when may we hope to see her?"

And with a paternal grimace, he added:

"But do not be uneasy; we will all hold our tongue; it would be too sad if she were to find it out."

THE UPSTART

YOU know good-natured, stout Dupontel, who looks like the type of a happy man, with his fat cheeks that are the color of ripe apples, his small, reddish moustache, turned up over his thick lips, with his prominent eyes, which never know any emotion or sorrow, which remind one of the calm eyes of cows and oxen, and his long back fixed onto two little wriggling, crooked legs, which obtained for him the nickname of corkscrew from some nymph of the ballet.

Dupontel, who had taken the trouble to be born, but not like the grand seigneurs whom Beaumarchais made fun of once upon a time, was ballasted with a respectable number of millions, as is becoming in the sole heir of a house that had sold household utensils and appliances for over a century.

Naturally, like every other upstart who respects himself, he wished to appear something, to play at being a clubman, and also to play to the gallery, because he had been educated at Vangirard and knew a little English; because he had gone through his voluntary service in the army for twelve months [1] at Rouen; because he was a tolerable singer, could drive four-in-hands, and play lawn-tennis.

Always studiedly well-dressed, too correct in every

[1] Although, in France, as in Germany, military service is compulsory, men are allowed to serve in both countries as *one-year volunteers;* they enjoy certain privileges, find their own uniform, &c., and it, of course, entails considerable expense.— TRANSLATOR.

way, copying his way of speaking, his hats and his trousers from the three or four snobs who set the fashion, reproducing other people's witticisms, learning anecdotes and jokes by heart, like a lesson, to use them again at small parties, constantly laughing, without knowing why his friends burst into roars of merriment, and was in the habit of keeping pretty girls for the pleasure of his best friends. Of course he was a perfect fool, but after all, a capital fellow, to whom it was only right to extend a good deal of indulgence.

When he had taken his thirty-first mistress, and had made the discovery that in love, money does not create happiness two-thirds of the time, that they had all deceived him, and made him perfectly ridiculous at the end of the week, Charles Dupontel made up his mind to settle down as a respectable married man, and to marry, not from calculation or from reason, but for love.

One autumn afternoon at Auteuil, he noticed in front of the club stand, among the number of pretty women who were standing round the braziers, a girl with such lovely delicate complexion that it looked like an apple blossom; her hair was like threads of gold, and she was so slight and supple that she reminded him of those outlines of saints which one sees in old stained-glass church windows. There was also something enigmatical about her, for she had at the same time the delightfully ingenuous look of a school girl during the holidays, and also of some enlightened young lady, who already knew the how and the why of everything, who is exuberant with youth and life, and who is eagerly waiting for the moment when marriage will at length allow her to say and to do everything that comes into her head, and to amuse herself to satiety.

Then she had such small feet that they would have gone into a woman's hand, a waist that could have been clasped by a bracelet, turned up eyelashes, which fluttered like the wings of a butterfly, close on an impudent and sensual nose, and a vague, mocking smile that made folds in her lips, like the petals of a rose.

Her father was a member of the Jockey Club, who was generally *cleared out,* as they call it, in the great races, but who yet defended his position bravely, and continued that, and who kept himself afloat by prodigies of coolness and skill. He belonged to a race which could prove that his ancestors had been at the court of Charlemagne, and not as musicians or cooks, as some people declared.

Her youth and beauty and her father's pedigree dazzled Dupontel, upset his brain, and altogether turned him upside down, and combined they seemed to him to be a mirage of happiness and of pride of family.

He got introduced to her father, at the end of a game of baccarat, invited him to shoot with him, and a month later, as if it were an affair to be hurried over, he asked for and obtained the hand of Mademoiselle Thérese de Montsaigne, and felt as happy as a miner who has discovered a vein of precious metal.

The young woman did not require more than twenty-four hours to discover that her husband was nothing but a ridiculous puppet, and immediately set about to consider how she might best escape from her cage, and befool the poor fellow, who loved her with all his heart.

And she deceived him without the least pity or the slightest scruple; she did it as if it were from instinctive hatred, as if it were a necessity for her not only to

make him ridiculous, but also to forget that she ought to sacrifice her virgin dreams to him, to belong to him, and to submit to his hateful caresses without being able to defend himself and to repel him.

She was cruel, as all women are when they do not love, delighted in doing audacious and absurd things, and in visiting everything, and in braving danger. She seemed like a young colt, that is intoxicated with the sun, the air and its liberty, and which gallops wildly across the meadows, jumps hedges and ditches, kicks, and whinnies joyously, and rolls about in the long, sweet grass.

But Dupontel remained quite imperturbable; he had not the slightest suspicion, and was the first to laugh when anybody told him some good story of a husband who had been cuckolded, although his wife repelled him, quarreled with him, and constantly pretended to be out of sorts or tired out, in order to escape from him. She seemed to take a malicious pleasure in checkmating him by her personal remarks, her disenchanting answers, and her apparent listlessness.

They saw a great deal of company, and he called himself Du Pontel now, and he even had thoughts of buying a title from the Pope; he only read certain newspapers, kept up a regular correspondence with the Orleans Princes, was thinking of starting a racing stable, and finished up by believing that he really was a fashionable man, and strutted about, and was puffed out with conceit, as he had probably never read La Fontaine's fable, in which he tells the story of the ass that is laden with relics which people salute, and so takes their bows to himself.

Suddenly, however, anonymous letters disturbed his quietude, and tore the bandage from his eyes.

At first he tore them up without reading them, and shrugged his shoulders disdainfully; but he received so many of them, and the writer seemed so determined to dot his *i's* and cross his *t's* and to clear his brain for him, that the unhappy man began to grow disturbed, and to watch and to ferret about. He instituted minute inquiries, and arrived at the conclusion that he no longer had the right to make fun of other husbands, and that he was the perfect counterpart of *Sganarelle.*[1]

Furious at having been duped, he set a whole private inquiry agency to work, continually acted a part, and one evening appeared unexpectedly with a commissary of police in the snug little bachelor's quarters which concealed his wife's escapades.

Thérese, who was terribly frightened, and at her wits' end at being thus surprised in all the disorder of her lover's apartments, and pale with shame and terror, hid herself behind the bed curtains, while he, who was an officer of dragoons, very much vexed at being mixed up in such a pinchbeck scandal, and at being caught in a silk shirt by these men who were so correctly dressed in frock coats, frowned angrily, and had to restrain himself so as not to fling his victim out of a window.

The police commissary, who was calmly looking at this little scene with the coolness of an amateur, prepared to verify the fact that they were caught *flagrante delicto,* and in an ironical voice said to her husband, who had claimed his services:

"I must ask for your name in full, Monsieur?"

[1] The *Cocu Imaginaire* (The Imaginary Cuckold), in Molière's play of that name.

"Charles Joseph Edward Dupontel," was the answer. And as the commissary was writing it down from his dictation, he added suddenly: "Du Pontel in two words, if you please, Monsieur le Commissionaire!"

THE CARTER'S WENCH

THE driver, who had jumped from his box, and was now walking slowly by the side of his thin horses, waking them up every moment by a cut of the whip, or a coarse oath, pointed to the top of the hill, where the windows of a solitary house, in which the inhabitants were still up, although it was very late and quite dark, were shining like yellow lamps, and said to me:

"One gets a good drop there, Monsieur, and well served, by George."

And his eyes flashed in his thin, sun-burnt face, which was of a deep brickdust color, while he smacked his lips like a drunkard, who remembers a bottle of good liquor that he has lately drunk, and drawing himself up in a blouse like a vulgar swell, he shivered like the back of an ox, when it is sharply pricked with the goad.

"Yes, and well served by a wench who will turn your head for you before you have tilted your elbow and drank a glass!"

The moon was rising behind the snow-covered mountain peaks, which looked almost like blood under its rays, and which were crowned by dark, broken clouds, which whirled about and floated, and reminded the passenger of some terrible Medusa's head. The gloomy plains of Capsir, which were traversed by torrents, extensive meadows in which undefined forms were moving about, fields of rye, like huge golden table-covers, and here and there wretched villagers, and broad sheets of

water, into which the stars seemed to look in a melancholy manner, opened out to the view. Damp gusts of winds swept along the road, bringing a strong smell of hay, of resin of unknown flowers, with them, and erratic pieces of rock, which were scattered on the surface like huge boundary stones, had spectral outlines.

The driver pulled his broad-brimmed felt hat over his eyes, twirled his large moustache, and said in an obsequious voice:

"Does Monsieur wish to stop here? This is the place!"

It was a wretched wayside public-house, with a reddish slate roof, that looked as if it were suffering from leprosy, and before the door there stood three wagons drawn by mules, and loaded with huge stems of trees, and which took up nearly the whole of the road; the animals, which were used to halting there, were dozing, and their heavy loads exhaled a smell of a pillaged forest.

Inside, three wagoners, one of whom was an old man, while the other two were young, were sitting in front of the fire, which cackled loudly, with bottles and glasses on a large round-table by their side, and were singing and laughing boisterously. A woman with large round hips, and with a lace cap pinned onto her hair, in the Catalan fashion, who looked strong and bold, and who had a certain amount of gracefulness about her, and with a pretty, but untidy head, was urging them to undo the strings of their great leather purses, and replied to their somewhat indelicate jokes in a shrill voice, as she sat on the knee of the youngest, and allowed him to kiss her and to fumble in her bodice, without any signs of shame.

The coachman pushed open the door, like a man who knows that he is at home.

"Good evening, Glaizette, and everybody; there is room for two more, I suppose?"

The wagoners did not speak, but looked at us cunningly and angrily, like dogs whose food had been taken from them, and who showed their teeth, ready to bite, while the girl shrugged her shoulders and looked into their eyes like some female wild beast tamer; and then she asked us with a strange smile:

"What am I to get you?"

"Two glasses of cognac, and the best you have in the cupboard," Glaizette, the coachman replied, rolling a cigarette.

While she was uncorking the bottle I noticed how green her eyeballs were; it was a fascinating, tempting green, like that of the great green grasshopper; and also how small her hands were, which showed that she did not use them much; how white her teeth were, and how her voice, which was rather rough, though cooing, had a cruel, and at the same time, a coaxing sound. I fancied I saw her, as in a mirage, reclining triumphantly on a couch, indifferent to the fights which were going on about her, always waiting — longing for him who would prove himself the stronger, and who would prove victorious. She was, in short, the hospitable dispenser of love, by the side of that difficult, stony road, who opened her arms to poor men, and who made them forget everything in the profusion of her kisses. She knew dark matters, which nobody in the world besides herself should know, which her sealed lips would carry away inviolate to the other world. She had never yet loved, and would never really love, because she was vowed to passing kisses which were so soon forgotten.

I was anxious to escape from her as soon as possible; no longer to see her pale, green eyes, and her mouth that bestowed caresses from pure charity; no longer to feel the woman with her beautiful, white hands, so near one; so I threw her a piece of gold and made my escape without saying a word to her, without waiting for any change, and without even wishing her good-night, for I felt the caress of her smile, and the disdainful restlessness of her looks. . . .

The carriage started off at a gallop to Formiguéres, amidst a furious jingling of bells. I could not sleep any more; I wanted to know where that woman came from, but I was ashamed to ask the driver and to show any interest in such a creature, and when he began to talk, as we were going up another hill, as if he had guessed my sweet thoughts, he told me all he knew about Glaizette. I listened to him with the attention of a child, to whom somebody is telling some wonderful fairy tale.

She came from Fontpédrouze, a muleteers' village, where the men spend their time in drinking and gambling at the inn when they are not traveling on the high roads with their mules, while the women do all the field work, carry the heaviest loads on their back, and lead a life of pain and misery.

Her father kept an inn; the girl grew up very happy; she was courted before she was fifteen, and was so coquettish that she was certain to be almost always found in front of her looking-glass, smiling at her own beauty, arranging her hair, trying to make herself like a young lady on the *prado*. And now, as none of the family knew how to keep a halfpenny, but spent more than they earned, and were like cracked jugs, from which the water escapes drop by drop, they found themselves

ruined one fine day, just as if they had been at the bottom of a blind alley. So on the "Feast of Our Lady of Succor," when people go on a pilgrimage to Font Romea, and the villages are consequently deserted, the inn-keeper set fire to the house. The crime was discovered through *la Glaizette,* who could not make up her mind to leave the looking-glass, with which her room was adorned, behind her, and so had carried it off under her petticoat.

The parents were sentenced to many years' imprisonment, and being let loose to live as best she could, the girl became a servant, passed from hand to hand, inherited some property from an old farmer, whom she had caught, as if she had been a thrush on a twig covered with bird-lime, and with the money she had built this public-house on the new road which was being built across the Capsir.

"A regular bad one, Monsieur," the coachman said in conclusion, "a vixen such as one does not see now in the worst garrison towns, and who would open the door to the whole fraternity, and not at all avaricious, but thoroughly honest. . . ."

I interrupted him in spite of myself, as if his words had pained me, and I thought of those pale green eyes, those magic eyes, eyes to be dreamt about, which were the color of grasshoppers, and I looked for them, and saw them in the darkness; they danced before me like phosphorescent lights, and I would have given then the whole contents of my purse to that man if he would only have been silent and urged his horses on to full speed, so that their mad gallop might carry me off quickly, quickly and far, and continually further from that girl.

THE MARQUIS

IT was quite useless to expostulate when that obstinate little Sonia, with a Russian name and Russian caprices, had said: "I choose to do it." She was so delicate and pretty also, with her slightly turned-up nose, and her rosy and childish cheeks, while every female perversity was reflected in the depths of her strange eyes, which were the color of the sea on a stormy evening. Yes, she was very charming, very fantastic, and above all, so Russian, so deliciously and imperiously Russian, and all the more Russian, as she came from Montmarte, and in spite of this, not one of her seven lovers who composed her usual menagerie had laughed when their enslaver said one day:

"You know my feudal castle at Pludun-Herlouët, near Saint Jacut-de-la-Mer, which I bought two years ago, and in which I have not yet set foot? Very well, then! The day after to-morrow, which is the first of May, we will have a house-warming there."

The seven had not asked for any further explanation, but had accompanied little Sonia, and were now ready to sit down to dinner under her presidency in the dining-room of the old castle, which was situated ten hours from Paris. They had arrived there that morning; they were going to have dinner and supper together, and start off again at daybreak next morning; such were Sonia's orders, and nobody had made the slightest objection.

Two of her admirers, however, who were not yet

used to her sudden whims, had felt some surprise, which was quickly checked by expressions of enthusiastic pleasure on the part of the others.

"What a delightful, original idea! Nobody else would have thought of such things! Positively, nobody else. Oh! these Russians!" But those who had known her for some time, and who had been consequently educated not to be surprised at anything, found it all quite natural.

It was half-past six in the evening, and the gentlemen were going to dress. Sonia had made up her mind to keep on her morning-gown, or if she dressed, she would do so later. Just then she was not inclined to move out of her great rocking-chair, from which she could see the sun setting over the sea. The sight always delighted her very much. It might have been taken for a large red billiard ball, rebounding from the green cloth. How funny it was! And how lucky that she was all alone to look at it, for those seven would not have understood it at all! Those men never have any soul, have they?

Certainly, the sunset was strange at first, but at length it made her sad, and just now Sonia's heart felt almost heavy, though the very sadness was sweet. She was congratulating herself more than ever on being alone, so as to enjoy that languor, which was almost like a gentle dream, when, in perfect harmony with that melancholy and sweet sensation, a voice rose from the road, which was overhung by the terrace; a tremulous, but fresh and pure voice sang the following words to a slow melody:

"Walking in Paris,
Having my drink,

A friend of mine whispered:
What do you think?
If love makes you thirsty,
Then wine makes you lusty."

The sound died away, as the singer continued on his way, and Sonia was afraid that she should not hear the rest; it was really terrible; so she jumped out of the rocking-chair, ran to the balustrade of terrace, and leaning over it, she called out: "Sing it again! I insist on it. The song, the whole song!"

On hearing this, the singer looked round and then came back, without hurrying, however, and as if he were prompted by curiosity, rather than by any desire to comply with her order, and holding his hand over his eyes, he looked at Sonia attentively, who, on her part, had plenty of time to look closely at him.

He was an old man of about sixty-five, and his rags and the wallet over his shoulder denoted a beggar, but Sonia immediately noticed that there was a certain amount of affectation in his wretchedness. His hair and beard were not shaggy and ragged, like such men usually wear them, and evidently he had his hair cut occasionally, and he had a fine, and even *distinguished* face, as Sonia said to herself. But she did not pay much attention to that, as for some time she had noticed that old men at the seaside nearly all looked like gentlemen.

When he got to the foot of the terrace, the beggar stopped, and wagged his head and said: "Pretty! The little woman is very pretty!" But he did not obey Sonia's order, who repeated it, almost angrily this time, beating a violent tattoo on the stone-work. "The song, the whole song!"

He did not seem to hear, but stood there gaping, with a vacant smile on his face, and as his head was rather inclined towards his left shoulder, a thin stream of saliva trickled from his lips onto his beard, and his looks became more and more ardent. "How stupid I am!" Sonia suddenly thought. "Of course he is waiting for something." She felt in her pocket, in which she always carried some gold by way of half-pence, took out a twenty-franc piece and threw it down to the old man. He, however, did not take any notice of it, but continued looking at her ecstatically, and was only roused from his state of bliss by receiving a handful of gravel which she threw at him, right in his face.

"Do sing!" she exclaimed. "You must; I will have it; I have paid you." And then, still smiling, he picked up the napoleon and threw it back onto the terrace, and then he said proudly, though in a very gentle voice: "I do not ask for charity, little lady; but if it gives you pleasure, I will sing you the whole song, the whole of it, as often as you please." And he began the song again, in his tremulous voice, which was more tremulous than it had been before, as if he were much touched.

Sonia was overcome, and without knowing was moved into tears; delighted because the man had spoken to her so familiarly, and rather ashamed at having treated him as a beggar; and now her whole being was carried away by the slow rhythm of the melody, which related an old love story, and when he had done he again looked at her with a smile, and as she was crying, he said to her: "I dare say you have a beautiful horse, or a little dog that you are very fond of, which is ill. Take me to it, and I will cure it: I understand it thor-

oughly. I will do it *gratis,* because you are so pretty."

She could not help laughing. "You must not laugh," he said. "What are you laughing at? Because I am poor? But I am not, for I had work yesterday, and again to-day. I have a bag full. See, look here!" And from his belt he drew a leather purse in which coppers rattled. He poured them out into the palm of his hand, and said merrily: "You see, little one, I have a purse. Forty-seven sous; forty-seven!" "So you will not take my napoleon?" Sonia said. "Certainly not," he replied. "I do not want it; and then, I tell you again, I will not accept alms. So you do not know me?" "No, I do not." "Very well, ask anyone in the neighborhood. Everybody will tell you that the Marquis does not live on charity."

The Marquis! At that name she suddenly remembered that two years ago she had heard his story. It was at the time that she bought the property, and the vendor had mentioned the *Marquis* as one of the curiosities of the soil. He was said to be half silly, at any rate an original, almost in his dotage, living by any lucky bits that he could make as horse-coper and veterinary. The peasants gave him a little work, as they feared that he might throw spells over anyone who refused to employ him. They also respected him on account of his former wealth and of his title, for he had been rich, very rich, and they said that he really was a marquis, and it was said that he had ruined himself in Paris by speculating. The reason, of course, *was women!*

At that moment the dinner bell began to ring, and a wild idea entered Sonia's head. She ran to the little door that opened onto the terrace, overtook the musi-

cian, and with a ceremonious bow she said to him: "Will you give me the pleasure and the honor of dining with me, Marquis?"

The old man left off smiling and grew serious; he put his hand to his forehead, as if to bring old recollections back, and then with a very formal, old-fashioned bow, he said: "With pleasure, my dear." And letting his wallet drop, he offered Sonia his arm.

When she introduced this new guest to them, all the seven, even to the best drilled, started. "I see what disturbs you," she said. "It is his dress. Well! It really leaves much to be desired. But wait a moment; that can soon be arranged."

She rang for her lady's maid and whispered something to her, and then she said: "Marquis, your bath is ready in your dressing-room. If you will follow Sabina, she will show you to it. These gentlemen and I will wait dinner for you." And as soon as he had gone out, she said to the youngest there: "And now, Ernest, go upstairs and undress; I will allow you to dine in your morning coat, and you will give your dress coat and the rest to Sabina, for the Marquis."

Ernest was delighted at having to play a part in the piece, and the six others clapped their hands. "Nobody else could think of such things; nobody, nobody!"

Half an hour later they were sitting at dinner, the Marquis in a dress coat on Sonia's left, and it was a great deception for the seven. They had reckoned on having some fun with him, and especially Ernest, who set up as a wit, had intended to *draw him*. But at the first attempt of this sort, Sonia had given him a look which they all understood, and dinner began very cere-

moniously for the seven, but merrily and without restraint between Sonia and the old man.

They cut very long faces, those seven, but inwardly, if one can say so, for of course they could not dream of showing how put out they were, and those inward long faces grew longer still when Sonia said to the old fellow, quite suddenly: "I say, how stupid these gentlemen are! Suppose we leave them to themselves?"

The Marquis rose, offered her his arm again, and said: "Where shall we go to?" But Sonia's only reply was to sing the couplet of that song which she had remembered:

"For three years I passed
The nights with my love,
In a beautiful bed
In a splendid alcove.
Though wine makes me sleepy,
Yet love keeps me frisky."

And the seven, who were altogether dumbfounded this time, and who could not conceal their vexation, saw the couple disappear out of the door which led to Sonia's apartments. "Hum!" Ernest ventured to say, "this is really rather strong!" "Yes," the eldest of the menagerie replied. "It certainly is rather strong, but it will do! You know, there is nobody like her for thinking of such things!"

The next morning, the *château* bell woke them up at six o'clock, when they had agreed to return to Paris, and the seven men asked each other whether they should go and wish Sonia good-morning, as usual, before she was out of her room. Ernest hesitated more than any

of them about it, and it was not until Sabina, her maid, came and told them that her mistress insisted upon it, that they could make up their minds to do so, and they were surprised to find Sonia in bed by herself.

"Well!" Ernest asked boldly, "and what about the Marquis?" "He left very early," Sonia replied. "A queer sort of marquis, I must say!" Ernest observed contemptuously, and growing bolder. "Why, I should like to know?" Sonia replied, drawing herself up. "The man has his own habits, I suppose!" "Do you know, Madame," Sabina observed, "that he came back half an hour after he left?" "Ah!" Sonia said, getting up and walking about the room. "He came back? What did he want, I wonder?" "He did not say, Madame. He merely went upstairs to see you. He was dressed in his old clothes again."

And suddenly Sonia uttered a loud cry, and clapped her hands, and the seven came round to see what had caused her emotion. "Look here! Just look here!" she cried. "Do look on the mantel-piece! It is really charming! Do look!"

And with a smiling, and yet somewhat melancholy expression in her eyes, with a tender look which they could not understand, she showed them a small bunch of wild flowers, by the side of a heap of half-pennies. Mechanically she took them up and counted them, and then began to cry.

There were forty-seven of them.

THE BED

ON a hot afternoon during last summer, the large auction rooms seemed asleep, and the auctioneers were knocking down the various lots in a listless manner. In a back room, on the first floor, two or three lots of old silk, ecclesiastical vestments, were lying in a corner.

They were copes for solemn occasions, and graceful chasubles on which embroidered flowers surrounded symbolic letters on a yellowish ground, which had become cream-colored, although it had originally been white. Some second-hand dealers were there, two or three men with dirty beards, and a fat woman with a big stomach, one of those women who deal in second-hand finery, and who also manage illicit love affairs, who are brokers in old and young human flesh, just as much as they are in new and old clothes.

Presently a beautiful Louis XV. chasuble was put up for sale, which was as pretty as the dress of a marchioness of that period; it had retained all its colors, and was embroidered with lilies of the valley round the cross, and long blue iris, which came up to the foot of the sacred emblem, and wreaths of roses in the corners. When I had bought it, I noticed that there was a faint scent about it, as if it were permeated with the remains of incense, or rather, as if it were still pervaded by those delicate, sweet scents of by-gone years, which seemed to be only the memory of perfumes, the soul of evaporated essences.

When I got it home, I wished to have a small chair of the same period covered with it; and as I was handling it in order to take the necessary measures, I felt some paper beneath my fingers, and when I cut the lining, some letters fell at my feet. They were yellow with age, and the faint ink was the color of rust, and outside the sheet, which was folded in the fashion of years long past, it was addressed in a delicate hand: *To Monsieur l'Abbé d'Argence.*

The first three lines merely settled places of meeting, but here is the third:

"My Friend: I am very unwell, ill in fact, and I cannot leave my bed. The rain is beating against my windows, and I lie dreaming comfortably and warmly on my eider-down coverlet. I have a book of which I am very fond, and which seems as if it really applied to me. Shall I tell you what it is? No, for you would only scold me. Then, when I have read a little, I think, and will tell you what about.

"Having been in bed for three days, I think about my bed, and even in my sleep I meditate on it still, and I have come to the conclusion that the bed constitutes our whole life; for we were born in it, we live in it, and we shall die in it. If, therefore, I had Monsieur de Crébillon's pen, I should write the history of a bed, and what exciting and terrible, as well as delightful moving occurrences would not such a book contain! What lessons and what subjects for moralizing could one not draw from it, for everyone?

"You know my bed, my friend, but you will never guess how many things I have discovered in it within the last three days, and how much more I love it, in consequence. It seems to me to be inhabited, haunted,

if I may say so, by a number of people I never thought of, who, nevertheless, have left something of themselves in that couch.

"Ah! I cannot understand people who buy new beds, beds to which no memories or cares are attached. Mine, ours, which is so shabby, and so spacious, must have held many existences in it, from birth to the grave. Think of that, my friend; think of it all; review all those lives, a great part of which was spent between these four posts, surrounded by these hangings embroidered by human figures, which have seen so many things. What have they seen during the three centuries since they were first put up?

"Here is a young woman lying on this bed. From time to time she sighs, and then she groans and cries out; her mother is with her, and presently a little creature that makes a noise like a cat mewing, and which is all shriveled and wrinkled, comes from her. It is a male child to which she has given birth, and the young mother feels happy in spite of her pain; she is nearly suffocated with joy at that first cry, and stretches out her arms, and those around her shed tears of pleasure; for that little morsel of humanity which has come from her means the continuation of the family, the perpetuation of the blood, of the heart, and of the soul of the old people, who are looking on, trembling with excitement.

"And then, here are two lovers, who for the first time are flesh to flesh together in that tabernacle of life. They tremble; but transported with delight, they have the delicious sensation of being close together, and by degrees their lips meet. That divine kiss makes them one, that kiss, which is the gate of a terrestrial heaven, that kiss which speaks of human delights, which continu-

ally promises them, announces them, and precedes them. And their bed is agitated like the tempestuous sea, and it bends and murmurs, and itself seems to become animated and joyous, for the maddening mystery of love is being accomplished on it. What is there sweeter, what more perfect in this world than those embraces, which make one single being out of two, and which give to both of them at the same moment the same thought, the same expectation, and the same maddening pleasure, which descends upon them like a celestial and devouring fire?

"Do you remember those lines from some old poet, which you read to me last year? I do not remember who wrote them, but it may have been Rousard:

> "When you and I in bed shall lie,
> Lascivious we shall be,
> Enlaced, playing a thousand tricks,
> Of lovers, gamesomely.

"I should like to have that verse embroidered on the top of my bed, where Pyramus and Thisbe are continually looking at me out of their tapestry eyes.

"And think of death, my friend; of all those who have breathed out their last sigh to God in this bed. For it is also the tomb of hopes ended, the door which closes everything, after having been the one which lets in the world. What cries, what anguish, what sufferings, what groans, how many arms stretched out towards the past; what appeals to happiness that has vanished for ever; what convulsions, what death-rattles, what gaping lips and distorted eyes have there not been in this bed, from which I am writing to you, during the three centuries that it has sheltered human beings!

" The bed, you must remember, is the symbol of life; I have discovered this within the last three days. There is nothing good except the bed, and are not some of our best moments spent in sleep?

" But then again, we suffer in bed! It is the refuge of those who are ill and suffering; a place of repose and comfort for worn-out bodies, and, in a word, the bed is part and parcel of humanity.

" Many other thoughts have struck me, but I have no time to note them down for you, and then, should I remember them all? Besides that, I am so tired that I mean to retire to my pillows, stretch myself out at full length, and sleep a little. But be sure and come to see me at three o'clock to-morrow; perhaps I may be better, and able to prove it to you.

" Good-bye, my friend; here are my hands for you to kiss, and I also offer you my lips."

AN ADVENTURE IN PARIS

IS there any stronger feeling than curiosity in a woman? Oh! Fancy seeing, knowing, touching what one has dreamt about! What would a woman not do for that? When once a woman's eager curiosity is aroused, she will be guilty of any folly, commit any imprudence, venture upon anything, and recoil from nothing. I am speaking of women who are really women, who are endowed with that triple-bottomed disposition, which appears to be reasonable and cold on the surface, but whose three secret compartments are filled. The first, with female uneasiness, which is always in a state of flutter; the next, with sly tricks which are colored in imitation of good faith, with those sophistical and formidable tricks of apparently devout women; and the last, with all those charming, improper acts, with that delightful deceit, exquisite perfidy, and all those wayward qualities, which drive lovers who are stupidly credulous, to suicide; but which delight others.

The woman whose adventure I am about to relate, was a little person from the provinces, who had been insipidly chaste till then. Her life, which was apparently so calm, was spent at home, with a busy husband and two children, whom she brought up like an irreproachable woman. But her heart beat with unsatisfied curiosity, and some unknown longing. She was continually thinking of Paris, and read the fashionable papers eagerly. The accounts of parties, of the dresses and various entertainments, excited her longing; but,

above all, she was strangely agitated by those paragraphs which were full of double meaning, by those veils which were half raised by clever phrases, and which gave her a glimpse of culpable and ravishing delights, and from her country home, she saw Paris in an apotheosis of magnificent and corrupt luxury.

And during the long nights, when she dreamt, lulled by the regular snores of her husband, who was sleeping on his back by her side, with a silk handkerchief tied round his head, she saw in her sleep those well-known men whose names appeared on the first page of the newspapers as great stars in the dark skies; and she pictured to herself their life of continual excitement, of constant debauches, of orgies such as they indulged in in ancient Rome, which were horridly voluptuous, with refinements of sensuality which were so complicated that she could not even picture them to herself.

The boulevards seemed to her to be a kind of abyss of human passions, and there could be no doubt that the houses there concealed mysteries of prodigious love. But she felt that she was growing old, and this, without having known life, except in those regular, horridly monotonous, every-day occupations, which constitute the happiness of the home. She was still pretty, for she was well preserved in her tranquil existence, like some winter fruit in a closed cupboard; but she was agitated and devoured by her secret ardor. She used to ask herself whether she should die without having experienced any of those damning, intoxicating joys, without having plunged once, just once into that flood of Parisian voluptuousness.

By dint of much perseverance, she paved the way for a journey to Paris, found a pretext, got some relations

to invite her, and as her husband could not go with her, she went alone, and as soon as she arrived, she invented a reason for remaining for two days, or rather for two nights, if necessary, as she told him that she had met some friends who lived a little way out of town.

And then she set out on a voyage of discovery. She went up and down the boulevards, without seeing anything except roving and numbered vice. She looked into the large *cafés,* and read the *Agony Column* of the *Figaro,* which every morning seemed to her like a tocsin, a summons to love. But nothing put her on the track of those orgies of actors and actresses; nothing revealed to her those temples of debauchery which she imagined opened at some magic word, like the cave in the *Arabian Nights,* or those catacombs in Rome, where the mysteries of a persecuted religion were secretly celebrated.

Her relations, who were quite middle-class people, could not introduce her to any of those well-known men with whose names her head was full, and in despair she was thinking of returning, when chance came to her aid. One day, as she was going along the *Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin,* she stopped to look into a shop full of those colored Japanese knick-knacks, which strike the eye on account of their color. She was looking at the little ivory buffoons, the tall vases of flaming enamel, and the curious bronzes, when she heard the shopkeeper dilating, with many bows, on the value of an enormous, pot-bellied, comical figure, which was quite unique, he said, to a little, bald-headed, gray-bearded man.

Every moment, the shopkeeper repeated his customer's name, which was a celebrated one, in a voice like a trumpet. The other customers, young women and

well-dressed gentlemen, gave a swift and furtive, but respectful glance at the celebrated writer, who was looking admiringly at the china figure. They were both equally ugly, as ugly as two brothers who had sprung from the same mother.

"I will let you have it for a thousand francs, Monsieur Varin, and that is exactly what it cost me. I should ask anybody else fifteen hundred, but I think a great deal of literary and artistic customers, and have special prices for them. They all come to me, Monsieur Varin. Yesterday, Monsieur Busnach bought a large, antique goblet of me, and the other day I sold two candelabra like this (is it not handsome?) to Monsieur Alexander Dumas. If Monsieur Zola were to see that Japanese figure, he would buy it immediately, Monsieur Varin."

The author hesitated in perplexity, as he wanted to have the figure, but the price was above him, and he thought no more about her looking at him than if he had been alone in the desert. She came in trembling, with her eyes fixed shamelessly upon him, and she did not even ask herself whether he were good-looking, elegant or young. It was Jean Varin himself, Jean Varin. After a long struggle, and painful hesitation, he put the figure down onto the table. "No, it is too dear," he said. The shopkeeper's eloquence redoubled. "Oh! Monsieur Varin, too dear? It is worth two thousand francs, if it is worth a sou." But the man of letters replied sadly, still looking at the figure with the enameled eyes: "I do not say it is not; but it is too dear for me." And thereupon, she, seized by a kind of mad audacity, came forward and said: "What

shall you charge me for the figure?" The shopkeeper, in surprise, replied: "Fifteen hundred francs, Madame." "I will take it."

The writer, who had not even noticed her till that moment, turned round suddenly; he looked at her from head to foot, with half-closed eyes, observantly, and then he took in the details, as a connoisseur. She was charming, suddenly animated by that flame which had hitherto been dormant in her. And then, a woman who gives fifteen hundred francs for a knick-knack is not to be met with every day.

But she was overcome by a feeling of delightful delicacy, and turning to him, she said in a trembling voice: "Excuse me, Monsieur; no doubt I have been rather hasty, as perhaps you had not finally made up your mind." He, however, only bowed, and said: "Indeed, I had, Madame." And she, filled with emotion, continued: "Well, Monsieur, if either to-day, or at any other time, you change your mind, you can have this Japanese figure. I only bought it because you seemed to like it."

He was visibly flattered, and smiled. "I should much like to find out how you know who I am?" he said. Then she told him how she admired him, and became quite eloquent as she quoted his works, and while they were talking he rested his arms on a table, and fixed his bright eyes upon her, trying to make out who and what she really was. But the shopkeeper, who was pleased to have that living puff of his goods, called out, from the other end of the shop: "Just look at this, Monsieur Varin; is it not beautiful?"

And then everyone looked round, and she almost

trembled with pleasure at being seen talking so intimately with such a well-known man.

At last, however, intoxicated, as it were, by her feelings, she grew bold, like a general does, who is going to give the order for an assault. "Monsieur," she said, "will you do me a great, a very great pleasure? Allow me to offer you this funny Japanese figure, as a keepsake from a woman who admires you passionately, and whom you have seen for ten minutes."

Of course he refused, and she persisted, but still he resisted her offer, at which he was much amused, and at which he laughed heartily; but that only made her more obstinate, and she said: "Very well, then, I shall take it to your house immediately. Where do you live?"

He refused to give her his address, but she got it from the shopkeeper, and when she had paid for her purchase, she ran out to take a cab. The writer went after her, as he did not wish to accept a present for which he could not possibly account. He reached her just as she was jumping into the vehicle, and getting in after her, he almost fell onto her, and then tumbled onto the bottom of the cab as it started. He picked himself up, however, and sat down by her side, feeling very much annoyed.

It was no good for him to insist and to beg her; she showed herself intractable, and when they got to the door, she stated her conditions. "I will undertake not to leave this with you," she said, "if you will promise to do all I want to-day." And the whole affair seemed so funny to him that he agreed. "What do you generally do at this time?" she asked him; and after hesitating for a few moments, he replied: "I

generally go for a walk." "Very well, then, we will go to the *Bois de Boulogne!*" she said, in a resolute voice, and they started.

He was obliged to tell her the names of all the well-known women, pure or impure, with every detail about them; their life, their habits, their private affairs, and their vices; and when it was getting dusk, she said to him: "What do you do every day at this time?" "I have some absinthe," he replied, with a laugh. "Very well, then, Monsieur," she went on, seriously, "let us go and have some absinthe."

They went into a large *café* on the boulevard which he frequented, and where he met some of his colleagues, whom he introduced to her. She was half mad with pleasure, and she kept saying to herself: "At last! At last!" But time went on, and she observed that she supposed it must be about his dinner time, and she suggested that they should go and dine. When they left *Bignon's,* after dinner, she wanted to know what he did in the evening, and looking at her fixedly, he replied: "That depends; sometimes I go to the theater." "Very well, then, Monsieur; let us go to the theater."

They went to the Vaudeville with an order, thanks to him, and, to her great pride, the whole house saw her sitting by his side, in the balcony stalls.

When the play was over, he gallantly kissed her hand, and said: "It only remains for me to thank you for this delightful day. . . ." But she interrupted him: "What do you do at this time, every night?" "Why . . . why . . . I go home." She began to laugh, a little tremulous laugh. "Very well, Monsieur . . . let us go to your rooms."

They did not say anything more. She shivered oc-

They went into a large café on the boulevard.

casionally, from head to foot, feeling inclined to stay, and inclined to run away, but with a fixed determination, after all, to see it out to the end. She was so excited that she had to hold onto the baluster as she went upstairs, and he came up behind her, with a wax match in his hand.

As soon as they were in the room, she undressed herself quickly, and retired without saying a word, and then she waited for him, cowering against the wall. But she was as simple as it was possible for a provincial lawyer's wife to be, and he was more exacting than a pascha with three tails, and so they did not at all understand each other. At last, however, he went to sleep, and the night passed, and the silence was only disturbed by the *tick-tack* of the clock, and she, lying motionless, thought of her conjugal nights; and by the light of the Chinese lantern, she looked, nearly heart-broken, at the little fat man lying on his back, whose round stomach raised up the bed-clothes like a balloon filled with gas. He snored with the noise of a wheezy organ pipe, with prolonged snorts and comic chokings. His few hairs profited by his sleep, to stand up in a very strange way, as if they were tired of having been fastened for so long to that pate, whose bareness they were trying to cover, and a small stream of saliva was running out of one corner of his half-open mouth.

At last the daylight appeared through the drawn blinds; so she got up and dressed herself without making any noise, and she had already half opened the door, when she made the lock creak, and he woke up and rubbed his eyes. He was some moments before he quite came to himself, and then, when he remembered all that had happened, he said: "What! Are you going al-

ready?" She remained standing, in some confusion, and then she said, in a hesitating voice: "Yes, of course; it is morning. . . ."

Then he sat up, and said: "Look here, I have something to ask you, in my turn." And as she did not reply, he went on: "You have surprised me most confoundedly since yesterday. Be open, and tell me why you did it all, for upon my word I cannot understand it in the least." She went close up to him, blushing like as if she had been a virgin, and said: "I wanted to know . . . what . . . what vice . . . really was, . . . and . . . well . . . well, it is not at all funny."

And she ran out of the room, and downstairs into the street.

A number of sweepers were busy in the streets, brushing the pavements, the roadway, and sweeping everything on one side. With the same regular motion, the motion of mowers in a meadow, they pushed the mud in front of them in a semi-circle, and she met them in every street, like dancing puppets, walking automatically with their swaying motion. And it seemed to her as if something had been swept out of her; as if her over-excited dreams had been pushed into the gutter, or into the drain, and so she went home, out of breath, and very cold, and all that she could remember was the sensation of the motion of those brooms sweeping the streets of Paris in the early morning.

As soon as she got into her room, she threw herself onto her bed and cried.

MADAME BAPTISTE

WHEN I went into the waiting-room at the station at Loubain, the first thing I did was to look at the clock, and I found that I had two hours and ten minutes to wait for the Paris express.

I felt suddenly tired, as if I had walked twenty miles, and then I looked about me as if I could find some means of killing the time on the station walls, and at last I went out again, and stopped outside the gates of the station, racking my brains to find something to do. The street, which was a kind of a boulevard, planted with acacias, between two rows of houses of unequal shape and different styles of architecture, houses such as one only sees in a small town, ascended a slight hill, and at the extreme end of it, there were some trees, as if it ended in a park.

From time to time, a cat crossed the street, and jumped over the gutters, carefully. A cur sniffed at every tree, and hunted for fragments from the kitchens, but I did not see a single human being, and I felt listless and disheartened. What could I do with myself? I was already thinking of the inevitable and interminable visit to the small *café* at the railway station, where I should have to sit over a glass of undrinkable beer and the illegible newspaper, when I saw a funeral procession coming out of a side street into the one in which I was, and the sight of the hearse was a relief to me. It would, at any rate, give me something to do for ten minutes. Suddenly, however, my curiosity was aroused.

The corpse was followed by eight gentlemen, one of whom was weeping, while the others were chatting together, but there was no priest, and I thought to myself:

"This is a non-religious funeral," but then I reflected that a town like Loubain must contain at least a hundred free-thinkers, who would have made a point of making a manifestation. What could it be then? The rapid pace of the procession clearly proved that the body was to be buried without ceremony, and, consequently, without the intervention of religion.

My idle curiosity framed the most complicated suppositions, and as the hearse passed me, a strange idea struck me, which was to follow it, with the eight gentlemen. That would take up my time for an hour, at least, and I, accordingly, walked with the others, with a sad look on my face, and on seeing this, the two last turned round in surprise, and then spoke to each other in a low voice.

No doubt they were asking each other whether I belonged to the town, and then they consulted the two in front of them, who stared at me in turn. This close attention which they paid me, annoyed me, and to put an end to it, I went up to them, and, after bowing, I said:

"I beg your pardon, gentlemen, for interrupting your conversation, but seeing a civil funeral, I have followed it, although I did not know the deceased gentleman whom you are accompanying."

"It is a woman," one of them said.

I was much surprised at hearing this, and asked:

"But it is a civil funeral, is it not?"

The other gentleman, who evidently wished to tell

me all about it, then said: "Yes and no. The clergy have refused to allow us the use of the church."

On hearing that I uttered a prolonged *A—h!* of astonishment. I could not understand it at all, but my obliging neighbor continued:

"It is rather a long story. This young woman committed suicide, and that is the reason why she cannot be buried with any religious ceremony. The gentleman who is walking first, and who is crying, is her husband."

I replied with some hesitation:

"You surprise and interest me very much, Monsieur. Shall I be indiscreet if I ask you to tell me the facts of the case? If I am troubling you, think that I have said nothing about the matter."

The gentleman took my arm familiarly.

"Not at all, not at all. Let us stop a little behind the others, and I will tell it you, although it is a very sad story. We have plenty of time before getting to the cemetery, whose trees you see up yonder, for it is a stiff pull up this hill."

And he began:

"This young woman, Madame Paul Hamot, was the daughter of a wealthy merchant in the neighborhood, Monsieur Fontanelle. When she was a mere child of eleven, she had a terrible adventure; a footman violated her. She nearly died, in consequence, and the wretch's brutality betrayed him. A terrible criminal case was the result, and it was proved that for three months the poor young martyr had been the victim of that brute's disgraceful practices, and he was sentenced to penal servitude for life.

"The little girl grew up stigmatized by disgrace, isolated without any companions, and grown-up people

would scarcely kiss her, for they thought that they would soil their lips if they touched her forehead, and she became a sort of monster, a phenomenon to all the town. People said to each other in a whisper: 'You know, little Fontanelle,' and everybody turned away in the streets when she passed. Her parents could not even get a nurse to take her out for a walk, as the other servants held aloof from her, as if contact with her would poison everybody who came near her.

"It was pitiable to see the poor child. She remained quite by herself, standing by her maid, and looking at the other children amusing themselves. Sometimes, yielding to an irresistible desire to mix with the other children, she advanced, timidly, with nervous gestures, and mingled with a group, with furtive steps, as if conscious of her own infamy. And, immediately, the mothers, aunts and nurses used to come running from every seat, who took the children entrusted to their care by the hand and dragged them brutally away.

"Little Fontanelle remained isolated, wretched, without understanding what it meant, and then she began to cry, nearly heart-broken with grief, and then she used to run and hide her head in her nurse's lap, sobbing.

"As she grew up, it was worse still. They kept the girls from her, as if she were stricken with the plague. Remember that she had nothing to learn, nothing; that she no longer had the right to the symbolical wreath of orange-flowers; that almost before she could read, she had penetrated that redoubtable mystery, which mothers scarcely allow their daughters to guess, trembling as they enlighten them, on the night of their marriage.

"When she went through the streets, always accompanied by her governess, as if her parents feared some

fresh, terrible adventure, with her eyes cast down under the load of that mysterious disgrace, which she felt was always weighing upon her, the other girls, who were not nearly so innocent as people thought, whispered and giggled as they looked at her knowingly, and immediately turned their heads absently, if she happened to look at them. People scarcely greeted her; only a few men bowed to her, and the mothers pretended not to see her, whilst some young blackguards called her *Madame Baptiste,* after the name of the footman who had outraged and ruined her.

"Nobody knew the secret torture of her mind, for she hardly ever spoke, and never laughed, and her parents themselves appeared uncomfortable in her presence, as if they bore her a constant grudge for some irreparable fault.

"An honest man would not willingly give his hand to a liberated convict, would he, even if that convict were his own son? And Monsieur and Madame Fontanelle looked on their daughter as they would have done on a son who had just been released from the hulks. She was pretty and pale, tall, slender, distinguished-looking, and she would have pleased me very much, Monsieur, but for that unfortunate affair.

"Well, when a new sub-prefect was appointed here eighteen months ago, he brought his private secretary with him. He was a queer sort of fellow, who had lived in the *Latin Quarter,*[1] it appears. He saw Mademoiselle Fontanelle, and fell in love with her, and when told of what occurred, he merely said: 'Bah! That is just a guarantee for the future, and I would rather

[1] The students' quarter in France, where so many of them lead rackety, fast lives.— TRANSLATOR.

it should have happened before I married her, than afterwards. I shall sleep tranquilly with that woman.'

" He paid his addresses to her, asked for her hand, and married her, and then, not being deficient in boldness, he paid wedding-calls,[1] as if nothing had happened. Some people returned them, others did not, but, at last, the affair began to be forgotten, and she took her proper place in society.

" She adored her husband as if he had been a god, for, you must remember, he had restored her to honor and to social life, that he had braved public opinion, faced insults, and, in a word, performed such a courageous act, as few men would accomplish, and she felt the most exalted and uneasy love for him.

" When she became pregnant, and it was known, the most particular people and the greatest sticklers opened their doors to her, as if she had been definitely purified by maternity.

" It is funny, but so it is, and thus everything was going on as well as possible, when, the other day, was the feast of the patron saint of our town. The Prefect, surrounded by his staff and the authorities, presided at the musical competition, and when he had finished his speech, the distribution of medals began, which Paul Hamot, his private secretary, handed to those who were entitled to them.

" As you know, there are always jealousies and rivalries, which make people forget all propriety. All the ladies of the town were there on the platform, and, in his proper turn, the bandmaster from the village of Mourmillon came up. This band was only to receive

[1] In France and Germany, the newly-married couple pay the wedding-calls, which is the direct opposite to our custom.— TRANSLATOR.

a second-class medal, for one cannot give first-class medals to everybody, can one? But when the private secretary handed him his badge, the man threw it in his face and exclaimed:

"'You may keep your medal for Baptiste. You owe him a first-class one, also, just as you do me.'

"There were a number of people there who began to laugh. The common herd are neither charitable nor refined, and every eye was turned towards that poor lady. Have you ever seen a woman going mad, Monsieur? Well, we were present at the sight! She got up and fell back on her chair three times following, as if she had wished to make her escape, but saw that she could not make her way through the crowd, and then another voice in the crowd exclaimed:

"'Oh! Oh! Madame Baptiste!'

"And a great uproar, partly laughter, and partly indignation, arose. The word was repeated over and over again; people stood on tip-toe to see the unhappy woman's face; husbands lifted their wives up in their arms, so that they might see the unhappy woman's face, and people asked:

"'Which is she? The one in blue?'

"The boys crowed like cocks, and laughter was heard all over the place.

"She did not move now on her state chair, just as if she had been put there for the crowd to look at. She could not move, nor disappear, nor hide her face. Her eyelids blinked quickly, as if a vivid light were shining in her face, and she panted like a horse that is going up a steep hill, so that it almost broke one's heart to see it. Meanwhile, however, Monsieur Hamot had seized the ruffian by the throat, and they were rolling on the

ground together, amidst a scene of indescribable confusion, and the ceremony was interrupted.

" An hour later, as the Hamots were returning home, the young woman, who had not uttered a word since the insult, but who was trembling as if all her nerves had been set in motion by springs, suddenly sprang on the parapet of the bridge, and threw herself into the river, before her husband could prevent her. The water is very deep under the arches, and it was two hours before her body was recovered. Of course, she was dead."

The narrator stopped, and then added:

" It was, perhaps, the best thing she could do in her position. There are some things which cannot be wiped out, and now you understand why the clergy refused to have her taken into church. Ah! If it had been a religious funeral, the whole town would have been present, but you can understand that her suicide added to the other affair, and made families abstain from attending her funeral; and then, it is not an easy matter, here, to attend a funeral which is performed without religious rites."

We passed through the cemetery gates and I waited, much moved by what I had heard, until the coffin had been lowered into the grave, before I went up to the poor fellow who was sobbing violently, to press his hand vigorously. He looked at me in surprise through his tears, and then said:

" Thank you, Monsieur." And I was not sorry that I had followed the funeral.

HAPPINESS

THE sky was blue, with light clouds that looked like swans slowly sailing on the waters of a lake, and the atmosphere was so warm, so saturated with the subtle odors of the mimosas, that Madame de Viellemont ordered coffee to be served on the terrace which overlooked the sea.

And while the steam rose from the delicate china cups, one felt an almost inexpressible pleasure in looking at the sails, which were gradually becoming lost in the mysterious distance, and at the almost motionless sea, which had the sheen of jewels, which attracted the eyes like the looks of a dreamy woman.

Monsieur de Pardeillac, who had arrived from Paris, fresh from the remembrance of the last election there, from that Carnival of variegated posters, which for weeks had imparted the strange aspect of some Oriental bazaar to the whole city, had just been relating the victory of *The General,* and went on to say that those who had thought that the game was lost, were beginning to hope again.

After listening to him, old Count de Lancolme, who had spent his whole life in rummaging libraries, and who had certainly compiled more manuscripts than any Benedectine friar, shook his bald head, and exclaimed in his shrill, rather mocking voice:

"Will you allow me to tell you a very old story, which has just come into my head, while you were speaking, my dear friend, which I read formerly in an

old Italian city, though I forget at this moment where it was?

" It happened in the fifteenth century, which is far removed from our epoch, but you shall judge for yourselves whether it might not have happened yesterday.

" Since the day, when mad with rage and rebellion, the town had made a bonfire of the Ducal palace, and had ignominiously expelled that patrician who had been their *podestat,*[1] as if he had been some vicious scoundrel, had thrust his lovely daughter into a convent, and had forced his sons, who might have claimed their parental heritage, and have again imposed the abhorred yoke upon them, into a monastery, the town had never known any prosperous times. One after another the shops closed, and money became as scarce as if there had been an invasion of barbarian hordes, who had emptied the State treasury, and stolen the last gold coin.

" The poor people were in abject misery, and in vain held out their hands to passers-by under the church porches, and in the squares, while only the watchmen disturbed the silence of the starlit nights, by their monotonous and melancholy call, which announced the flight of the hours as they passed.

" There were no more serenades; no longer did viols and flutes trouble the slumbers of the lovers' choice; no longer were amorous arms thrown round women's supple waists, nor were bottles of red wine put to cool in the fountains under the trees. There were no more love adventures, to the rhythm of laughter and of kisses; nothing but heavy, monotonous weariness, and the anxiety as to what the next day might bring forth, and ceaseless, unbridled ambitions and lusts.

[1] Venetian and Genoese magistrate.— TRANSLATOR.

"The palaces were deserted, one by one, as if the plague were raging, and the nobility had fled to Florence and to Rome. In the beginning, the common people, artisans and shop-keepers had installed themselves in power, as in a conquered city, and had seized posts of honor and well-paid offices, and had sacked the Treasury with their greedy and eager hands. After them, came the middle classes, and those solemn upstarts and hypocrites, like leathern bottles blown out with wind, acting the tyrant and lying without the least shame, disowned their former promises, and would soon have given the finishing stroke to the unfortunate city, which was already at its last shifts.

"Discontent was increasing, and the *sbirri*[1] could scarcely find time to tear the seditious placards, which had been posted up by unknown hands, from the walls.

"But now that the old *podestat* had died in exile, worn out with grief, and that his children, who had been brought up under monastic rules, and were accustomed to nothing so much as to praying, thought only of their own salvation, there was nobody who could take his place.

"And so these kinglets profited by the occasion to strut about at their ease like great nobles, to cram themselves with luxurious meals, to increase their property by degrees, to put everything up for sale, and to get rid of those who, later on, could have called for accounts, and have nailed them to the pillory by their ears.

"Their arrogance knew no bounds, and when they were questioned about their acts, they only replied by menaces or raillery, and this state of affairs lasted for twenty years, when, as war was imminent with Lucca,

[1] Italian police officers.— TRANSLATOR.

the Council raised troops and enrolled mercenaries. Several battles were fought in which the enemy was beaten and was obliged to flee, abandoning their colors, their arms, prisoners, and all the booty in their camp.

" The man who had led the soldiers from battle, whom they had acclaimed as triumphant and laurel-crowned Cæsar, around their campfires, was a poor *condottiere,*[1] who possessed nothing in the world except his clothes, his buff jerkin and his heavy sword.

" They called him *Hercules,* on account of his strong muscles, his imposing build, and his large head, and also *Malavista,* because in those butcheries he had no pity, no weakness, but seemed, with his great murderous arms, as if he had the long reach of death itself. He had neither title, deeds, fortune, nor relations, for he had been born one night in the tent of a female camp follower; for a long time, an old, broken drum had been his cradle, and he had grown up anyhow, without knowing those maternal kisses and endearments that warm the heart, or the pleasure of not always sleeping on a hard bed, or of always eating tough beef, or of being obliged to tighten his sword belt when luck had turned like a weathercock when the wind shifts, and a man would gladly give all his share of the next booty for a moldy crust of bread and a glass of water.

" He was a simple and a brave man, whose heart was as virgin as some virgin shore, on which no human foot has ever yet left its imprint.

" The Chiefs of the Council were imprudent enough to summon Hercules Malavista within the walls of the town, and to celebrate his arrival with almost imperial

[1] Italian mercenary or free-lance, in the Middle Ages.— TRANSLATOR.

splendor, more, however, to deceive the people and to regain their waning popularity by means of some one else, by a ceremony copied from those of Pagan Rome, than to honor and recompense the services of a soldier whom they despised at the bottom of their hearts.

" The bells rang a full peal, and the archbishop and clergy and choir boys went to meet the Captain, singing psalms and hymns of joy, as if it might have been Easter. The streets and squares were strewn with branches of box roses and marjoram, while the meanest homes were decorated with flags, and hung with drapery and rich stuffs.

" The conqueror came in through Trajan's gate, bareheaded, and with the symbolical golden laurel wreath on his head; and sitting on his horse, that was as black as a starless night, he appeared even taller, more vigorous and more masculine than he really was. He had a joyous and tranquil smile on his lips, and a hidden fire was burning in his eyes, and his soldiers bore the flags and the trophies that he had gained, before him, and behind him there was a noise of clashing partisans and cross-bows, and of loud voices shouting *vivats* in his honor.

" In this fashion he traversed all the quarters of the town, and even the suburbs. The women thought him handsome and proud, blew kisses to him, and held up their children so that they might see him, and he might touch them, and the men cheered him, and looked at him with emotion, and many of them reflected and dreamt about that bright, unknown man, who appeared to be surrounded by a halo of glory.

" The members of the Council began to perceive the extent of the almost irreparable fault that they had

committed, and did not know what to do in order to ward off the danger by which they were menaced, and to rid themselves of a guest who was quite ready to become their master. They saw clearly that their hours were numbered, that they were approaching that fatal period at which rioting becomes imminent, when the leaders are carried away with it, like pieces of straw in a swift current.

"Hercules could not show himself in public without being received with shouts of acclamation and noisy greetings, and deputations from the nobility, as well as from the people, came repeatedly and told him that he had only to make a sign and to say a word, for his name to be in every mouth, and for his authority to be accepted. They begged him on their knees to accept the supreme authority, as though he would be conferring a favor on them, but the free-lance did not seem to understand them, and repelled their offers with the superb indifference of a soldier who has nothing to do with the people or a crown.

"At length, however, his resistance grew weaker; he felt the intoxication of power, and grew accustomed to the idea of holding the lives of thousands in his hands, of having a palace, arsenals full of arms, chests full of gold, ships which he could send on adventurous cruises wherever he pleased, and of governing that city, with all its houses and all its churches, and of being a leading figure at all grand functions in the cathedral.

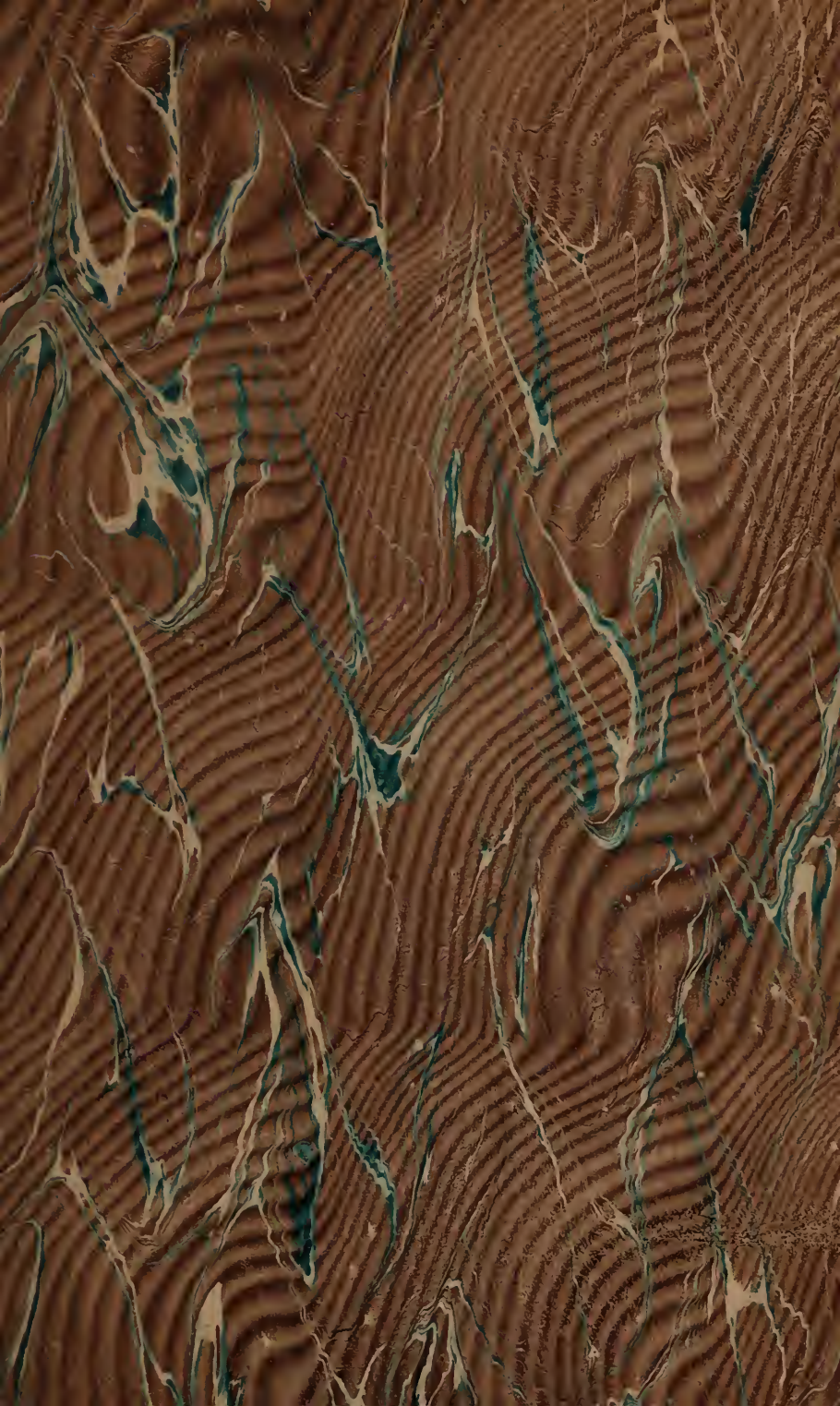
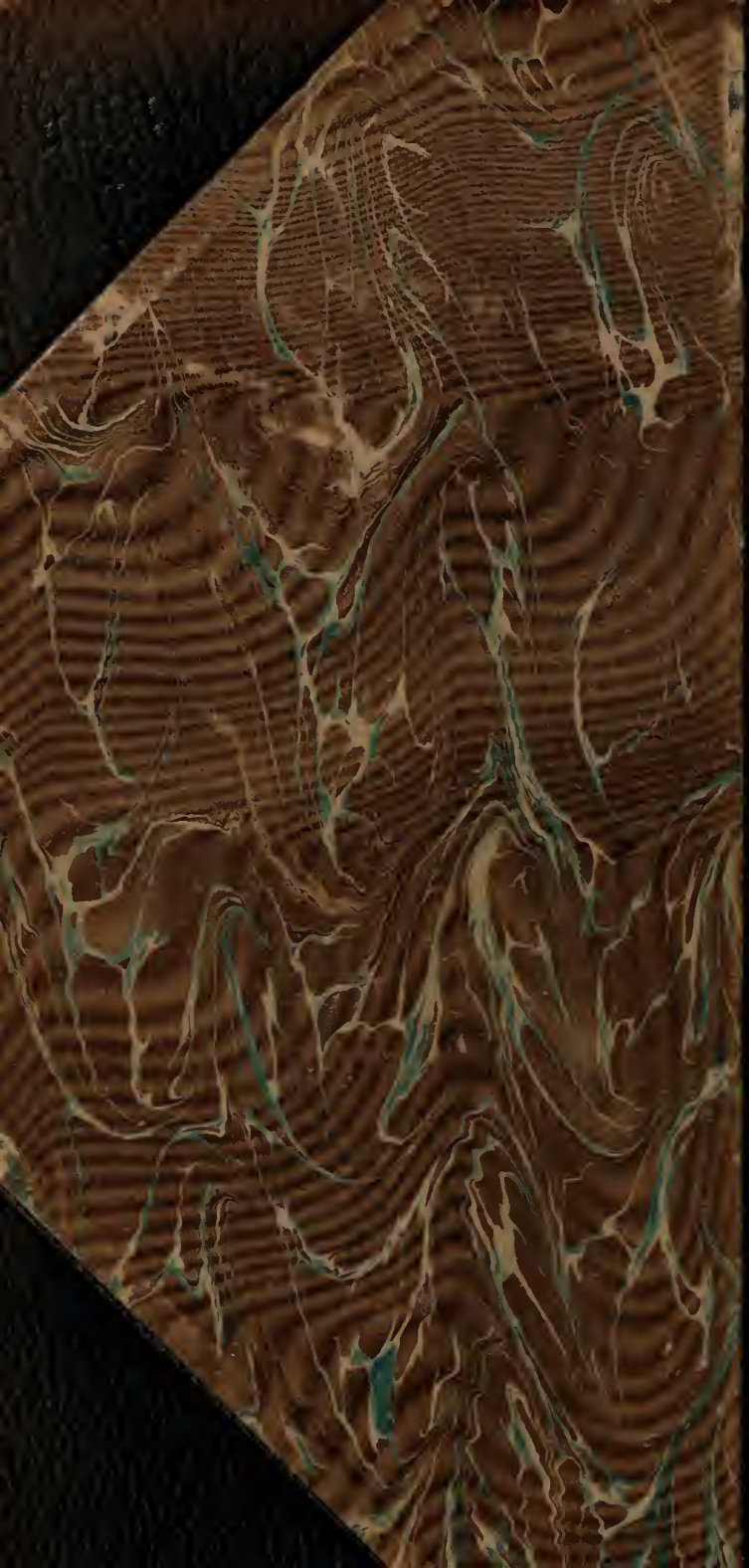
"The shop-keepers and merchants were overcome by terror at this, and bowed before the shadow of that great sword, which might sweep them all away and upset their false weights and scales. So they assembled secretly in a monastery of the Carmelite friars outside

the gates of the city, and a short time afterwards the weaver Marconelli, and the money-changer Rippone brought Giaconda, who was one of the most beautiful courtesans in Venice, and who knew every secret in the *Art of Love,* and whose kisses were a foretaste of Paradise, back with them from that city. She soon managed to touch the soldier with her delicate, fair skin, to make him inhale its bewitching odor in close proximity, and to dazzle him with her large, dark eyes, in which the reflection of stars seemed to shine, and when he had once tasted that feast of love, and that heavy wine of kisses, when he had clasped that pink and white body in his arms, and had listened to that voice which sounded as soft as music, and which promised him eternities of joy, and vowed to him eternities of pleasures, Hercules lost his head, and forgot his dreams and his oaths.

" Why lose precious hours in conspiring, in deluding himself with chimeras; why risk his life when he loved and was loved, and when the minutes were all too short, when he would have wished never to detach his lips from those of the woman he loved?

" And so he did whatever Gioconda demanded.

" They fled from the city, without even telling the sentinels who were on guard before his palace. They went far, far away, as they could not find any retreat that was sufficiently unknown and hidden, and at last they stopped at a small, quiet fishing village, where there were gardens full of lemon trees, where the deserted beach looked as if it were covered with gold, and where the sea was a deep blue until it was lost in the distance. And while the captain and the courtesan loved each other and wore themselves out with pleasure — with the enchantment of the sea close to them —

the irritated citizens, whom he had left were clamoring for their idol, were indignant at his desertion, and tore up the paving stones in the streets, to stone the man who had betrayed their confidence and worship.

"And they pulled his statue down from its pedestal, amidst spiteful songs and jokes, and the members of the Council breathed again . . . as they were no longer afraid of the great sword."